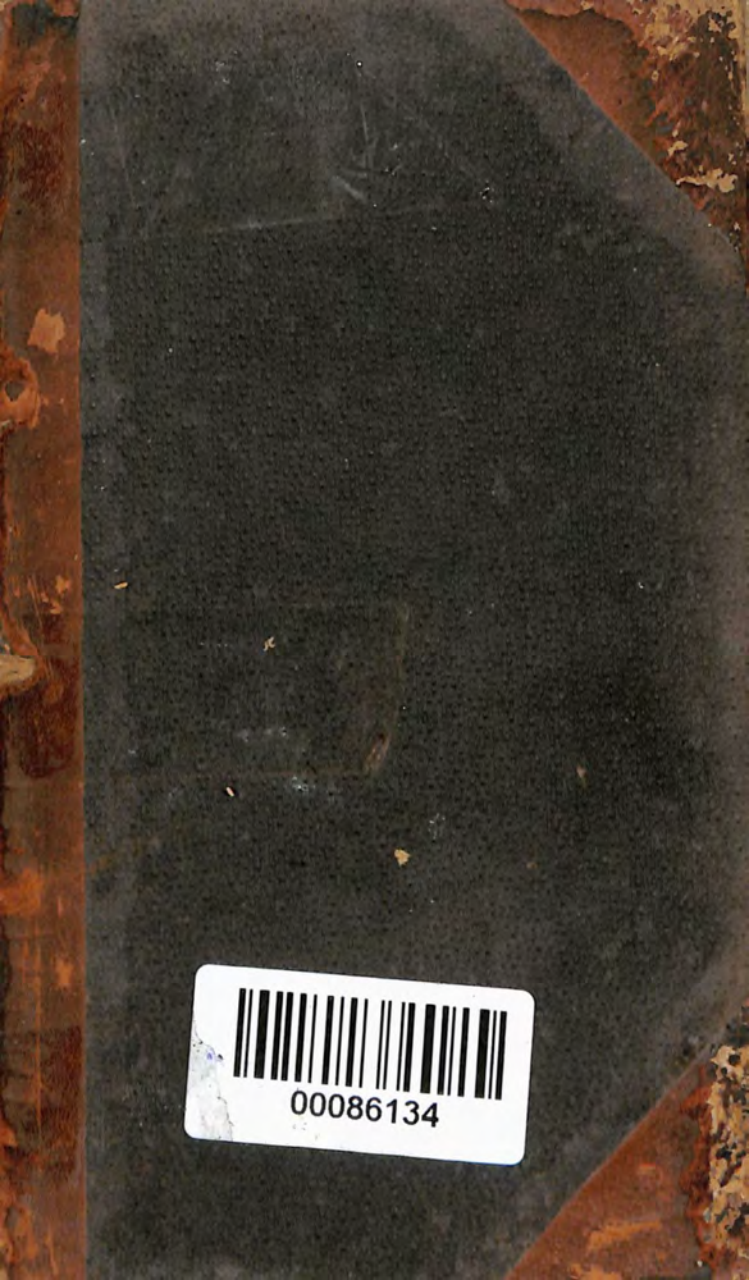
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SKETCHES IN THE PYRENEES;

WITH SOME REMARKS

ON

LANGUEDOC, PROVENCE, AND THE CORNICE.

3-h-22

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"SLIGHT REMINISCENCES OF THE RHINE," AND "THE GOSSIP'S WEEK."

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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LONDON:
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TO MY DAUGHTER,

IN WHOSE HAPPY HOME AND DEAR SOCIETY

I FIRST MADE CLOSE

AND DELIGHTFUL FELLOWSHIP WITH THE PYRENEES,

I INSCRIBE

THESE SLIGHT SKETCHES

OF

THEIR INEFFABLE BEAUTY.

March 6, 1837.

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SKETCHES IN THE PYRENEES,

&c. &c.

CHAPTER I.

DEPARTURE FROM PARIS—VERSAILLES AND ITS ECHOES —THEIR SECRETS—RAMBOUILLET—WOODS AND WOOD GODS — PLEASURE-GARDENS — HUNTING AND BEING HUNTED—PROCESSIONS, AND THEIR PROBABLE EFFECTS — DRESS — THE CHATEAU AND ITS DOUBTFUL WATERS—COUNTRY TO CHARTRES—CATHEDRAL SPIRES —COTTAGES AND COTTAGE GARDENS.

One always seems to enter Paris, or quit it, on a fête-day. This is one; and if I had not tears in my eyes, and in my heart too, I might say something of its holiday aspect. But I was sad myself, when we bid it adieu, and the gaiety of the crowd made me still sadder; so I felt relieved when we turned off from the sparkling alleys of the Champs Elysées into the well-known—but to-day deserted —road to Versailles; where, undistracted by new images, I might indulge in recollected ones.

There is always a queer sort of feel about the heart, when the moment comes to leave a place where one has lived long and happily, even though there may be no actual severing of home ties; but especially when we carry with us that feeling of doubt as to the future, which uncertain health naturally communicates to the mind. Even the grateful, well-wishing bow of the porter,—the last whose face offers its expression of concern,—and the cap off of his little son, who stands beside him smartened up for the occasion, have something touching in them; they are not the supple civilities of craving expectation anticipating future favours, but the evidence of regret,—perhaps regard,—whose cause is already in the past.

There are two roads from Paris to Tours: one that follows the course of the Loire, passing through its historical towns, and looking on its legendary castles; and another, which we have taken, (for reasons altogether unconnected with any thing either of taste or choice,) through Rambouillet, Chartres, &c. There may be, and probably are several others; but not having journeyed in their ways, I cannot answer for their being those of pleasantness.

Every one knows,—that is to say every one who has rambled this way,—the often-traversed road from Paris to Versailles, the beautiful bank of Sèvres, the hills of Meudon, and the rich woods of St. Cloud. Not a salient point, scarcely a retreating charm, in this courtly yet sylvan landscape remains unexplored; and English eyes are as familiar with its beauty, as with the perfect loveliness of Richmond Hill, or the patrician elegance of Roehampton; so I shall pass it over in silence, without awakening the echoes. At Versailles the sky was grey and still; a sky put together as if to suit and soften the effect of its characteristic melancholy, which under the influence of a broad, inundating sunshine, changes its complexional gloom into glare,—an arid though gorgeous glare, that brings out every stone, and writes *desertion* on them in gilt letters.

I have talked of not awakening the echoes; but of these second tongues, there are some here which, were they Irish,—that is, answering-ones, it might be curious to question; for they could tell us many a tale of hall and bower, and one with a great moral lesson in it,—one beginning in pomp,

beauty, glory, musk, embroidery, gallantry, and prayer,—running through all the velvet paths of a royal life, and all the rugged passages of a mortal one,—from triumphs and almost heathen adoration, to defeat and utter loneliness. Then merging into another, these initiated echoes might follow that also through the zig-zags of a naturally kind, but feeble nature, to its last stage of abasement and corruption,—deep corruption, from whose vile soil sprang an immortal flower, and with it the deadly tares which darkened its beauty, rendering it hideous in the eyes of the virtuous and the pitying. The echoes must have made sad music then; now they are silent, except when the great waters play, and then the voice of wonder, or of glee, calls up those vocal shadows.

The country to Rambouillet seemed insipid,—perhaps I might boldly say, *is*. St. Cyr was on our route, but we passed it unknowingly, with its recollections of Esther and Athalie, and other chaste and brilliant devices with which the antique Schehezerade amused the leisure of her admiring sultan. The first peep of the forest of Rambouillet was disappointing; it seemed, as we approached

the town, somewhat meagre and transparent: dwarf Dryades, fit only to huddle round a road-side box, belied the beautiful name of forest,—that other word for mystery,—that whispering word so full of promises, which the thin trees, looking like side-scene decorations, were absolutely incapable of performing.

However, there were some real trees, and in the Parc (which is fresh and verdant) some stately ones; we did not see much of it, though the wood gods, more demonstrative than the Versailles echoes, beckoned to us from the end of a long green alley, and might have tempted us to their haunts, had it been an hour earlier; for we saw their fantastic shadows playing with the last sunbeams on the grass, and almost heard the music of their reeds; yet we shook our heads at them, and turned away like the lady in *Comus*. The château looked royally dull—not noble; and has the air of being rather disrespectfully shoved into a corner, with all its historical recollections about it,—the last days of Francis I., the bright ones of Louis XIV., and the recent story of humiliated royalty.

Except its recollections and its state-bed, it has (I believe) little else to boast of. I do not know

whether the flower-knots and straight pieces of water spread out before the palace are called pleasure-grounds; but if they are, the same words have a very different signification in the Blenheim dictionary. This is Chinese scenery, where a dislocated lady, with her head on one side, might paddle about in a painted skiff, and seem quite of a piece with her accompaniments. Formal gardens hold their beauty less as a possession, than a grant on certain conditions of care and nicety, which grant is rendered void by neglect. The wild flowers and gadding branches, whose rude luxuriance accommodates itself to the ins and outs of natural scenery, assume, when they find their way into a trim enclosure, a briary and forgotten aspect that misbecomes the quaint parterre, shaped into the precise counterpart of its opposite neighbour. The parterres of Rambouillet look at this moment foul and tangled, the palace varnish fast rubbing off; and neglect, like the brown paper of a lacquered screen, begins to show itself through the crevices.*

* When the above was written, Rambouillet belonged to the state, and not to the king. It does so still; but is let to a wealthy individual.

No one comes here now, the people tell us. In the time of Charles Dix there was rare hunting in the forest; and the jocund sound of the horn, and the cheery clamour of the day-break sportsman, often routed the morning shadows. But the crowned Nimrod hunted a day too late, and was run down himself on that memorable third of August, when the men of Paris, laying violent hands on all the vehicles, public or private, that came in their way, dislodged their occupants with a civil speech, and a promise of restitution without injury when done with;* then stuffing in, drove off to Rambouillet to set up a new Jupiter, and hand the old dynasty out of the kingdom. Here the Duchesse de Berri bade adieu to the battered remains of the Swiss guards, with a brusque "*au revoir*;" and here began that famous steeple-chase, that hedge and ditch gallop, when the old racer was flung out, beaten, broke down, and erased from the list of running horses.

These things are still the other day of time, but begin to be the auld lang syne of memory. Ex-

* A promise in all cases (as we have been assured) conscientiously fulfilled.

cept where the high-spirited duchess, like another Anjou, Margarets it in the west, shedding blood fruitlessly, therefore, even in the sense of war, unwisely,—exasperating some, inspiring others, and neutralizing the effect of her courage and perseverance, her noble and undeniable contempt of danger, by her ill regulated head-work, the old stock seem as much forgotten at Gratz,* as James was at St. Germain. Whether the new Charles Edward may find another Culloden, and a luckier one than the old, time will tell; but should the royal exiles be inclined to superstition, there exists an historical parallel—close beyond any other on record—which may well alarm them for the issue.

When the Count de Montford, beaten at Nantes by the Duke of Normandy, was a prisoner in the Louvre, his army discomfited, his cause hopeless, the heroic Joan of Flanders, his undaunted wife, presented her infant son to the people of Rennes, and thus addressed them in the simple home going speech of the times. "Haa, seigneurs! ne vous ébahessez mie de Monseigneur, que nous auons perdu. Le n'estoit qu'un homme, veez cy mon

* At least by the volatile Parisians.

petit enfant; qui sera (si Dieu plaist) son restorier, et vous fera des biens assez."

Maria Theresa did the same: both were successful. Perhaps, had the Duchesse de Berri remembered the historical precedent of the illustrious countess, or the more immediate example of her own fair ancestress, she might have still preserved for her son the possession of a crown. At least, the chance was on the cards.

As we entered Rambouillet, the bells were tolling in a procession of children attired, as for their first communion, in all the coquetry of toilette which virgin white and flowers admitted of,—veils floating, sashes streaming, and red hands clasping the prayer-book, and contriving to grasp the well-starched handkerchief at the same time. Before the children walked two priests, chaunting in the deep cathedral base; behind, two others blowing through the deeper-toned bassoon, whose grave and gradual swell came on the ear with a solemn and almost threatening sound, that strengthened into something judicial and condemnatory as it approached. I never hear this peculiar chaunt without thinking of the gone-by times, when nuns

were buried, and heretics burned alive,—a dark association, but soon dispelled by the innocent faces of the children, and the bustling piety of their anxious friends.

If there were not some distraction, and much vying in these things, they would be pretty, and even touching; for children give grace and interest to all rituals, in which their natural feelings may be supposed to make them untutored actors. But no sooner was the show of devotion over, than the young performers flew back to their expecting mothers, to have their sashes settled and their veils arranged; and this mundane movement seemed to make hypocrisy of the pious airs and expressions of humility, which they had exhibited but a few moments before. Yet still, as they dispersed among the trees, or descended two by two a flight of stone steps that graduate gently into the Parc, their childish forms and innocent-looking dress imaged purity very pleasingly.

Whether the species of emulation engendered by religious exhibitions, (I say religious ones, because they are almost the only public shows in which children decently brought up are permitted

to appear,) be or be not favourable to piety and moral feeling, cannot, I should think, admit of a question. The idea of dress, of admiration, of rivalship; the stimulus of praise, the desire of outdoing others, awakened probably for the first time, mingle with the sentiment of devotion, and weaken, if they do not wholly efface it. Children become for the moment public actors, conscious of having all eyes upon them, and of course each is desirous to play the first part; thus vanity—which nine times in ten engenders envy,—is brought into action, and the religious impression, which retirement would have strengthened, is probably either perverted or destroyed.

Sometimes a religious ceremony is made an instrument by which the spirit of intolerance is grafted into the young mind. I recollect once—it was the day of the fête-dieu at Montmorenci—a sharp little girl telling me that the procession was not to pass along the Hermitage road; adding, with a significant shake of the head, "à cause de Jean Jacques." If there was not more mercy in heaven than man shows to man, what would become of the best of us? For more than half a

century the body of the sceptic (if such he really was) has been mouldering in its tomb; and still the spot in which he breathed and suffered is deemed —because he breathed and suffered in it—too impure for the contact of holiness. How arrogant is the piety of man!—man who is forbidden to judge, lest he should be judged in return. And yet we have had our lesson: the divine founder of our faith, he in whom there could be no sin, sat down by the well-side, and talked with the woman of Samaria, "who worshipped she knew not what;" and suffered Mary Magdalen, "which was a sinner," to minister unto him.

This is a bell-ringing place, but not holy, as the chambermaid informs us; neither is it otherwise, (same authority); but a kind of medium heat, like the interior of St. Peter's at Rome, which, whether the snow falls or the sun blazes, always preserves the same equal temperature. Women prodigiously smart, but evidently no subscribers to the *Petit Courrier des Dames*, yet self-satisfied and happy in their voluminous borders standing boldly up from their foreheads, and then branching out like the wings of a Madagascar bat, as they

could possibly be in the last close fit of the imaginative Herbault.*

Drove through part of the Parc,—perhaps not the best part; it is green and lawny, but in its wide extent there are probably scenes much more beautiful than those which lay in our way, or it would not merit its high reputation. Not much to remark between Rambouillet and Chartres; at Epernon (I believe) nothing; at Maintenon, a château with a considerable display of—stagnant water I was going to say, misled by its green and yellow stillness; but I believe it is living, though it makes no sign. This château was one of the donations of Louis Quatorze to the calculating devotee, who ran (or rather hobbled) away from him when he lay on his death-bed. Pious, placid, and moral lady! who thoroughly understood the tactics of virtue, and possessed every ingredient of religion excepting its true spirit.

Dull plains with a distant belt of wood, and then

* I forget in what year Scheffer painted his Charlotte Corday, which has so completely revolutionized the French women's heads; but I believe about this time. Now they are all flat and compressed, like the Norman Judith's.

duller ones without it. Dropped asleep; awoke the next moment,—yellow fields and brown ones alternating; hay-making, too, but the after-grass like dust.

Another nap; and then a jolt which roused me thoroughly. All corn, with a splendid show of poppies mixing with the quiet azure of the corn-flower. Might, perchance, have shut my eyes again, had they not happened to light upon two tall spires, looking grand and grave in the distance, and—I thought—like the spires of a church or college (I forget which) that I used to love and admire in Bentley's edition of *Gray's Poems*. But that was in my childish days—a long time ago; so I cannot be precise, though I well remember the mourning cats with scarfs and hatbands, and the leaden-eyed melancholy which I used to think so divinely beautiful.

The descent to Chartres varies the monotony of the scene a little. It has wood, and houses niched in it, and a long suburb of clay cottages and clay walls, standing out in a bright sun, with a comfortable air which belongs more to the sun than to the habitations. These, though not sketch-book helps,

have, in the absence of other beauties, the eminent one of cleanliness. From Rambouillet onwards, the dwelling of the peasant has something of a neat and habitable air: vines are trained, and trees planted about it; and the paths before the door actually swept,—a mark of nicety not always evident in places nearer to the capital. I do not speak of these habitations as orderly, sash-windowed concerns; but as quiet homely huts, in which Gainsborough, or perhaps Morland, might, on a soft becoming day such as this is, have found something pleasant. I say a becoming day, for humble scenery of the cottage kind is a pastoral or a pigsty, just as the sky pleases.

But when the sun does shine, what a sweet page of rustic lore is the cottage-garden! no stone or mortar perfection of a wall—the mason's glory—enclosing it; but its own sweet hedge blossoming, and blooming, and glistening in the bright sky, and opening its pretty buds as if it would say "thank you," to the warm air that blows upon it. I have always delighted in the neatly drilled beds of peas and beans, the tufts of sage and rosemary, and other plants esteemed medicinal by their cul-

tivators; the ornamental rose-bush, and tree of luxury—apple or pear, and never could love fine gardens—stiff ones, I mean,—without one robin redbreast corner in them; where, if a poor bird hops about, it is from the shoulder of one cold statue to the head of another, and the bee is too far away from his hive, his thymy bank, and his honey-cups, to make frequent visits. Pleasure-grounds may run into whims, if they please; but the dear old garden has something sacred in its homeliness, which one respects as one does an old library-chair, or a worm-eaten folio that counts ages. The velvet sofa is there, soft and gorgeous, and the morocco leather gilt and embossed; but we are loath to use them, and better love the old corner, and the old leaves which open almost of themselves at the places we are fond of. In a garden, every thing should accord with the habitation to which it belongs. Erasmus's catalogue of herbs, —rue, all-heal, buglass, marjoram, herb of life, &c. become the gammer's scanty flower-knot, as the standard fruit-tree, the nectarine-wall, the winter-walk, and the yew hedge do our old-fashioned manor house.

CHAPTER II.

CHARTRES—OLD CATHEDRALS AND THEIR ASSOCIATIONS —CASTLES AND GHOSTS—A BALL-ROOM GHOST—AN UNBELIEVER—CHATEAUDUN—VENDÔME—THE THREE DAYS—WATER MILLS—EFFECT OF A FINE DAY—DECENT GAIETY—CONTRASTS—BRONZING AND BAKING.

CHARTRES has a large hot square, or rather circus, all in a blaze to-day; and fine boulevard walks canopied with foliage, and a superb cathedral, owner of the two steeples already mentioned. One is rich in the finely-pierced and elaborate fretwork of gothic architecture; the other stands beside it in simpler guise, like a waiting gentlewoman,—no disparagement either to abigail or spire, for every one knows that though the mistress may be the finest, the maid is often the fairest of the two; and as for the steeples, each is esteemed perfect in its way. For myself, I must acknowledge, that the rich lightness of the ornamented one pleased me more than the heavy simplicity of its neighbour, which may

be bad taste; but as my guide-book does not tell me which to admire, I must e'en run risks.

Of the interior of this fine cathedral I can say nothing, not having seen it. An accident has debarred me from what I should consider as an especial pleasure, for I greatly love old cathedrals; they are not merely missals, but histories glowingly illuminated, every colour fresh as the Madonna blue on the soft vellum. When I roam about their venerable aisles, and look on their quaint monuments, where the knight of the Holy Land sleeps in effigy, his feet upon the emblematic lion, his head upon the small stone bolster; and by his side his loyal spouse, her hands crossed upon her breast, the lion exchanged for the gentle and faithful greyhound, and the countenance devout and penetrated, even in its stony stillness; my mind receives an impression similar to that which is made on it by the perusal of Shakspeare's historical plays. The lord cardinals, the mitred churchmen—Canterbury, York, and Winchester; kings and confessors, queens who found no shriving time; abbots, legates, coronations, and interments,—the pageants of the age,—and those who figured in them, rise up

before me in their living lineaments; every stone is a record, every sculptured niche an illustration: and this feeling, though deeper and more awakened when the mind meditates the past within the antique and sacred edifices of its mother-land, is still powerful and present with me in the grey cathedrals of France, many of which were erected during those periods of its history, when wars and alliances brought this country most in contact with our own.

The cathedral of Chartres is one of the long sequency of churches erected during the period when the English were masters of many of the south-western provinces of France; and which mark the time of their lordship over possessions, ages since returned to a more natural allegiance, and show proof of the fine prevailing taste in sacred architecture which distinguished—what present civilization calls a rude period, pervading the religious structures of those olden days with the sentiment as well as the aspect of holiness, and giving to their dark and stately masses a power over the mind, rarely produced by modern gorgeousness, and still more rarely by modern meanness—miscalled simplicity,—which whitewashes its barn, and with

a horror of idolatry greater than even that of Moses himself, allows no mark of art or honour, except the small token of upholstery visible in the stuffed seats and curtained pews of the parish aristocracy. There is a subterraneous church under the cathedral, believed by the people to be an ancient grotto of the druids; who, from the depths of the forests which once (according to old writers) covered the face of the country, prophesied and sacrificed. But being converted to Christianity by certain disciples of our Saviour, sent into Gaul by St. Peter, and afterwards persecuted by their Roman masters, concealed themselves within this same grotto, where they found a place of refuge and of prayer; and which,—when Constantine brought better times,—became the base of the cathedral, then constructed upon it with remarkable magnificence. A certain number of old women called *les dames de sousterre*, or *les sœurs de soûsterre*, were employed to take care of it, and attend to the lamps, &c.; the last died (as we are told) a short time since, and the office has fallen into desuetude.

Still the same bare and quiet country,—with now and then a preponderance (as in many parts

of France) of wide plains seeming to touch the horizon, and giving what may be called—if the expression be not inadmissible—distance without perspective. At Chateaudun, an old castle looks forwards from an abrupt hill, with a river at its feet,—a river of many windings, that makes its way pleasantly through a fertile valley. They tell me this château has trap-doors and galleries, chapels, tombs, and knightly halls; in short, all the attributes of a castle of gallant and courtly recollections, every stone of whose pavement has doubtless been pressed by the small footsteps of bright ladies, and the spurred heels of gallant cavaliers,—at least it is pleasant to think so, and to find records in the fancy, when one has not time or means to seek for them in the family archives. One thing is however wanting,—an article too of necessity in a proper old castle establishment,—a ghost. None walk abroad here; but ghosts are known to be of solitary habits, preferring utter loneliness; or, if sent on missions, a tête-à-tête, to any other form of society. So it is possible, that the gregarious taste of the porter's family, who, though six in number, and of both sexes and various degrees of relationship,

think it most agreeable (and merely for the sake of sociability, fear being entirely out of the question) to occupy the same dormitory, may have frightened them off their ground.

I did once hear of a ball-room ghost. It was the spectre of a lady, the wife of an Irish peer; who, being ill and counselled not to go to a certain masquerade, replied with vehemence, "I shall be there, dead or alive;" and kept her word, for (though she died in the mean while) there she was: and some, who had been at her funeral, saw her walking up and down in a corner of the ball-room, which either from the influence of terror, or from supernatural hindrance, none approached. Her mask and domino were white; but the face and form were strongly and fearfully visible through them. It was an eye-witness who told me the story, believing it firmly, but denying his belief, as is usual in such cases. Reason examines, but credulity, when questioned, takes offence, and brings out its *no* boldly.

All the gens d'armes, and half the National Guards of Chateaudun, are gone to anticipate (which sometimes means create) an expected dis-

turbance in a village two leagues off. At every little town on our way, our passports are scrupulously examined, and the names, &c. copied and despatched to Paris. All travellers are submitted to the same inspection, and consequent delay. In the absence of the gens d'armes, to whom this business is especially entrusted, a *commissaire de police* waited on us officially. I asked him if there was any news from La Vendée,—any thing that confirmed the horrible report of the Duchesse de Berri having been burned to death in the Château de Pennessaire. He replied, with much *sang-froid*, that he had heard such a rumour, but did not believe it: he, for his part, never believed rumours; he did not believe there was such a castle, much less that it had been attacked, or burned; seemed to question the existence of the Chouans, and rather to consider the Duchesse de Berri as an agreeable phantasmagoria. He had been too long in the army (he said) to put faith in any thing, especially things that were printed. This ancient county of Dunois gave its name to the renowned Count de Dunois, (the famous Bastard of Orleans,) who, united with Jeanne d'Arc, gained a great victory

over our armies at Patay, and made Talbot prisoner. The portal of the royal abbey of Saint Magdelene is mentioned by old historians as among the most ancient in France.

Some gentle river scenery and a pretty mill at Cloye, and just before it a true French château of the old style,—Tonerre—or Trompette—or Heaven knows what, with a rich bristling of all sorts of things on and about it. Out in the name, which happens to be Montigny, though either of mine would do. As we advance, the country becomes more agreeable, the surface more varied; frequent wooded banks, and a general air of pleasantness. Country houses "few and far between," but not however like the visions of angels; but old, odd things, to which the high chimneys, straight roofs, and supplementary turrets, give an antique and castellated air. Vendôme is agreeably placed on the Loir, (not *Loire*,) the same river that looked pretty at Cloye, and which turns its mills here in the midst of cheerful scenery. Remarked a church porch curiously sculptured,—and more than one, but only in passing. Often the exterior of those old churches is the best part; the inside being not

unfrequently whitewashed and gaudified out of its antique duskiness. Vendôme did once, and perhaps does still, possess a famous abbey—la Trinité, and in the collegial church the tombs of its ancient counts; but whether the revolution may have spared or destroyed them, I know not. Town full of soldiers and looking menacing, as if it stood on the threshold of La Vendée. It is probably to its western vicinity that we owe the show of allegiance to present circumstances, which forces itself into notice in this country. The feeling does not, however, seem to lie deep; the fruits of the three immortal days have not ripened so rapidly as those who sowed their seeds looked for; and expectation, having long outrun performance,—perhaps possibility,—sits down disappointed and repining.

But what days they were! I have heard it asked contemptuously, and even by Frenchmen, "Qu'a-t-on fait de bien?" But it seems to me, that a Frenchman, be his political creed what it may,—be he Carlist, republican, or legitimist, should never hear those three days named without a proud and reverential feeling. For three days a great and populous city remained without a govern-

ment, a police, or a military force; the people sole and absolute rulers; power in the hands of poverty, licence within the reach of the long repressed; yet not an outrage committed, not an article of private property purloined; the stranger and the feeble respected, and even hunger refusing to appease its cravings unlawfully! What a sublime page of history!

And how unlike the common course of other revolutions, brought about by similar means. Public indignation (alloyed, perhaps, in some instances by party spirit or individual views) pulls down an edifice raised with—it may be—mixed wisdom and unwiseness, but placed in trust with the weak or the unfaithful. The people, unaccustomed to the exercise of political power, but under the strong influence of political excitement, lay their unqualified hands on the fragments which lie heaped before them; and without stopping to separate the precious parts from the rubbish, either cast them away, or break them up into distorted forms. The reckless, but often noble spirits who helped mainly to unbase the edifice, are often buried under its ruins; and those who stood by and shouted

while it rocked to its foundation, or set the brand to its tottering walls, take forcible possession of the wreck,—not with the calm, sustained courage of freed men, but with the licentious violence of manumitted slaves. It was thus in the old French revolution; great wrongs were avenged by great crimes. When the desolation has passed away, then the temple is again raised up; but the cement is blood, and the base, ashes.

I have always had a fancy for water-mills, and seldom look on one, if it be attached to any thing cottage-like, without thinking of Ralph and Fanny,* and all the charming illusions of my first opera. On a raw wintry morning, a water-mill may talk of damp and rats, and other comfortless things; but on such a day as this is, its cool gushing sound and spattery playfulness are delicious both to ear and eye. They are frequent here; and the towns being cheerfully situated, some on pleasant eminences, and all with cool walks and foliage about them, give to the general

* Vide *Maid of the Mill.*

air of the country (bare bits excepted) a character, which may be pronounced,—at least with the sky of to-day on it,—decidedly agreeable.

But there is something so happy,—I might almost say so good, in a lovely day; it brings out beauty, as a kind word does the timid feelings of the retiring heart,—so gently and so sweetly, that we can hardly be out of sorts even with an unamiable looking nature, (I was going to say a blank one; but nature is never blank,) when the bright sun is shining and the soft shadows playing on it; and take common pleasantness to our bosoms, as if we had never followed higher idolatries. To-day the hedges, starred with innumerable eyes of pink and daisy; the little gardens tufted with sweet marjoram, lettuce, or purple thyme; the currant-bush, green elder, honeysuckle, and other humble things,—buds, leaves, and flowers, still with their spring freshness on them, create a charming country feeling in the mind, all the more heartfelt for its homeliness. This is just the day for the wild stream and the bank of violets, for the thrush's song and the linnet's, and for the pretty yellow wagtail,—the little

shepherdess of the spring, who hops about with its bright pecking air among the sheep. In France, a department may be sometimes known by the form of its belfries. Here the thin tapering spire rises up from a tuft of trees, or a cluster of low roofs in every village; sometimes a long and steep roof, set all over with projecting windows and flanked with tall chimneys, shows itself through a thick wood, sending my fancy to the châteaux of the Boccage, or Beaupréau,—the new Jerusalem, and with a Lusignan, too, amongst the high defenders of its antique faith and old allegiance.

I can never cease to admire the quiet, yet awakened spirit, in which the people in France convene for purposes either of business or amusement. Fêtes being things of frequent occurrence, are for that very reason soberly, though really, enjoyed: the mass is heard, the gossip indulged in, the southern farandoule or northern quadrille performed, all with due decorum and sustained cheerfulness, but with a total absence of the giddy excitation produced by unusual circumstances; and the whole seems more like a pleasant and accustomed pause from labour, than an unexpected jerk

out of toil into riot, which is too often the character of mirthful meetings in countries vaunting their morality more boldly. The market traffic, commonly a turbulent barter of commodities, is here a quiet interchange of benefits. We passed through two crowded market-places to-day, and are now entering a third,—women marvellously plain, the young looking old, and the old brown and glazed as gingerbread, but models of neatness, from the well-bleached head-cloth to the tidy shoe, or clattering sabot.

It is well they are so, for nothing but its neatness could redeem the stout linen cap—the French night-cap, as it used to be called, or the forehead-binder, opposing its mass of dead white to the scorched and blazing skin, and contradicting all that Ovid has said on the subject of contrasts. Nothing less than a downright Hebe could stand it, and the gods would be sorely puzzled to find a cup-bearer amongst the bandle-cloth and egg-haskets which we have at this moment in view. In Italy the sun bronzes, in France it bakes: the fishermen of Naples and its coast are like bronze statues; the women too, of the same class, often (though not

always) deeply tinged; but when young, their skins are usually soft and equal. Here the tanning is of a dryer kind, or perhaps the surface on which it acts.

Magnificent roads, and posting worthy of them; and, though still regretting the royal towers of Chambord, the Castle of Blois—itself a history, Chaumont with its "*forme religieuse*," and Chanteloup, the Dawley of the Duc de Choiseul, yet I begin to think that for one journeying, like myself, in search of health, the exchange of the Loire, its castles and its associations, for our Macadamized roads and common-place scenery, is wise at least, if not poetical.

CHAPTER III.

TOURS—FIRST EFFECT—SUNSHINE—MOONLIGHT—THE GREEN BONNET—NAMES AND THEIR MAGIC—THE LONG AGO—FIRST IMPRESSIONS—PERHAPS FALSE ONES—INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH SOCIETY—SOCIETY.

THE approach to Tours is imposing. The Loire sweeps by with a calm and noble flow, deriving from its own breadth and fulness the character of dignity which nature has, in this particular spot, denied to its banks; for whatever may elsewhere be their claim to lofty or romantic beauty, here they are low, and but for their fine and strong point, the town would be almost featureless. The scene is however largely composed, and there is a calm Flemish colouring about it that, like the dewy softness of a Swanveldt, or an Ostade, refreshes without exciting the fancy. The bridge is splendid; and the ample river, the boats at anchor or in movement, and the architectural preface which the

old towers put forth, form altogether a fair and pleasant picture, with some green and woody bits about it, that rise agreeably above the general tone. This seems poor praise for a view which has so often been extolled to the very skies; but I describe it as it strikes me, and though my impression may be a wrong one, I cannot borrow that of another.

It is true, that certain views require certain lights; and that many change, like the hues of a drake's neck, from a ray to a blot, as the sun shines or darkens on them. If the day be bright, an open river-view is all warmth and sparkle: if the next be grey, it is cold and dull: we perceive that its beauty was the effect of a favourable casualty, and scarcely know it for the same scene which the great sleight-of-hand master had warmed into picture. Moonlight is, however, the true setting off of calm, broad, silvery scenery, where a river forms the great feature, and the dependent landscape is just enough indented to throw down shadows on its lucid bosom: the wide blue sky so full of hope, the earth of peacefulness, the long track of light, compact yet broken, marking its starry way on the

waters, and the tall spire rising from its dark base and growing gleamy in the moonshine, are sweet ingredients of which the mind makes magic.

Once upon a time,—it was in summer days, when all things put on their best looks, I chanced to be in the habit of seeing a young lady (not knowing her) always in the same dress, and always —as I thought—with the same pretty, piquant, original look which had at first sight charmed my fancy. She never changed her bonnet; it was a capote of bright, tender, grasshopper green, that closed in upon her small round cheek, just as spring leaves might do about a pretty pink flower. Whenever the little green bonnet was seen approaching, my companions used to say, "Here comes your beauty;" and I was proud of my taste until winter came, and with it a black velvet hat,—a French contrivance,—unveiling the face, which proved to be a broad one, and lined with a spread of full-blown roses, that turned the tinting of the cheek to violet, and seemed to enlarge a forehead which had no longer any shade upon it, and was formed to look bold without it. If not an absolute red cabbage, hard-cored and sturdy, she was at least no longer

my pretty pink flower set in green leaves, but serves to illustrate the text of drakes' necks and sunshine.

We knew something of this historical Touraine formerly, when our turbulent kings wrote their names in its chronicles; when our second Henry married provinces, or gained them; and his son John promised them away again, and the Lady Blanch with them,—that fair Blanch whom Shakspeare has chronicled so soothly.

Anjou, Touraine, Poitou,—what fine old names! and how their very sound calls up those giving and taking, winning and losing times; when, with our hands full at home, we still found time to vary our domestic strifes with other "just and charitable wars" abroad. Nearer things are often forgotten, or vaguely recalled; but the long ago comes to the mind when the associating link is touched, each event classed, each figure identified, just as the days of youth do to the memory of age, that takes no note of yesterday; or the far perspective to the decaying sight, to which near objects seem confused and colourless.

There is something in the sound of the old Loire

—that river of past times, so long what might be almost called the line of demarcation between the ancient country of the Franks and the independent sovereignties which, being now amalgamated with it, form the great kingdom of France,—that gives a powerful historical interest to this spot. Names have often a cunning magic in them: here the very air is full of their power, full of those ancient ones which queens and noble ladies wore in honour—or otherwise, but whose antique simplicity is so beautiful. A soft and simple surname mingles charmingly with a proud hereditary denomination; the last (allied to old remembrances) gives a loftiness to the first, and derives from it a womanly and tender naïveté. What proud yet loving names are Mary Stuart and Jane Grey! and here Eleanor de Guyenne,—a proud yet gentle name, which would have well designated a purer spirit than hers was who bore it; Margaret of Anjou, another of the same cast and appropriation; Marie de Gonzagues, whom Cinq Mars loved and wooed in the embowered shades of Chaumont; with other intervening ones that make sweet music to the ear, are with us. The old links, sometimes of

flowers, sometimes of iron, which formerly united us with France, have so blended the country of the Loire with our historical recollections, that it has—if it be not incongruous to say so,—all the charming odour of that never-to-be-forgotten thing —our first story-book. Every spot here brings back the time when monarchs fought their own battles, when history was often poetry, though written in rough rhymes, and too often in sanguinary characters; when kings—and not those of Brentford either—entered by sound of trumpet, one at the right hand door, the other at the left, to talk away provinces, or barter kingdoms; while dames—and proud ones—stood by, each backing her party with royal Billingsgate: the one a cankered grandam and a queen, the other "a sad and passionate lady;" but both inexhaustible of speech and rancour, and one of them the most distressed —since Niobe—and lost of mothers.*

But we have more flappers here. Walter Scott has rebuilt Plessis les Tours with a master hand and an enchanted trowel, which will long outlast the stone and mortar of the *grand reliquaire*,

* Vide Shakspeare's *King John*.

Mâitre Pierre, who contrived to die, and, as it happened, in that identical castle, though hung over from stem to stern with life preservers from all the shrines of Christendom.

But it is time to enter Tours, the chief city of this fair Touraine, which presents itself like a capital, with a splendid street (la Rue Royale) opening from the bridge and traversing the heart of what, but for it, might be deemed an ordinary country town, but to which this great artery gives life and action. The first view is striking,—gay, handsome, and perfectly metropolitan; but there is something glaring about it, something (I fancied) demonstratively dressy and tea-drinking in the street groupes, and awful in the report of a frequented mall *(mail,)* still called by its old-fashioned name, so full of red heels and patches, where (as in most places of similar resort) the private history of every passing individual is probably caught and spitted for inspection, as humane children transfix a cock-chafer, and where there is, doubtless, circle within circle, like the filigree globes of an Indian toy. But I have formed my idea of Tours and its society from report, coloured perhaps by prejudice; and there is

certainly something very impertinent in a stranger like myself *probablying* and *perhapsing*—as far as in her lies—a place out of its reputation, though without any means of judging, except those limited ones afforded by a drive through the streets, and a lounge at the inn window. Perhaps the mall is deserted, the people the best-natured in the world, no tea drank, and dress at simplicity point. It may be, that all the household, fire-side loving deities who preside over Tours, may just now be railing at me from their high heavens, and setting me down as an impudent empty blockhead—for the gods call names—who talks instead of inquiring. Alas! what traveller, whether his journey be to the town's end, or the world's end, does not do so sometimes!

Every place, however, has its local physiognomy, and Tours I must think a very decided one. It is not the usual physiognomy of a French provincial town, but rather one that seems to have been conferred upon it by its English population, and its English system of society; both (as we are told) now on the decline, if not almost extinct.

I do not exactly know how it happens, but cer-

tainly, notwithstanding their many sterling and excellent qualities, our countrymen do not always improve the spot on which, in their foreign migrations, they happen to settle. Inns, it is true, are bettered; lodging-houses become suddenly neat, carpeted, and comfortable; shops brighten up; the pastry-cook who arranges ball-suppers, or supplies routs with croquignoles and orgeat, refreshes the stale bonbons that have garnished his windows for the last half year, and announces captain's biscuits, muffins, and mince pies, according to the season; while the milliner, who calls herself Parisian, exchanges her humble show of pasteboard shapes, for a thin curtain with a mystery of flowers, ribbons, and feathers behind it. Sundry shops diffuse the blessings of English drugs, English pencils, paper, water colours, pins, cutlery, &c.; the butcher salts tongues and rounds of beef *à l'Anglaise;* the baker makes English rolls;—in short, none are altogether faithful to native talent and invention except the milliner, whose goods are always announced as fresh from the capital, and the patriot coiffeur, who still rajeunits *à l'instar de Paris.*

This shop-window influence denotes the circulation of the golden good (or it may be, evil) by the British residents; and a few individuals are, no doubt, permanently benefited. But cupidity is sharpened, or excited, and of course the spirit of extortion called into play, to the advantage, probity apart, of one in ten, and the injury of the other nine. The native inhabitants let their houses, and retire into cheaper quarters; should any remain, the new comers take care to make society too expensive for them—indeed very often for themselves also; and so one half are obliged to sit *below the salt*, or to exhaust their resources in endeavours to obtain a post above it; while those who, from assurance or some lucky casualty, keep the head of the table, are often the very persons, morally speaking, who ought to stand at the buffet.

So say many who have tried Tours as a residence; perhaps this *say* may be the slander of the mortified, for others aver that when Tours was an English colony, the ethics of society were conscientiously practised there; and that it would have been deemed improper (if not immoral) to

have visited any one who had not been previously received by Lady A——, or Mrs. B——, C——, or D——, who had alternately wedged themselves into the high seat of patronage. Now Tours is French again, or nearly so, to the despair of the innkeepers, who wail after their prey like disappointed sea-gulls.

Except in the dear home circle, and the charming community of the country-house, the French certainly understand society better than we do. With them it is a relaxation, with us a business; in one country an intercourse, in another a ceremonial. I speak generally; not of our more rare and delightful exceptions,—charmed circles where minds develope their riches in the atmosphere of sympathy; but of the vying concern, consequently the cold and ceremonious one, which we too often make of it. High conversational people use society as a stage, aspirants as a stepping-stool: the herd as a matter of necessity, or a means of ostentation: but none in any station will receive their acquaintance, unless they can do so in a way perfectly in keeping with their neighbours' means—not their own.

The French are exactly the reverse of us: be matters how they may, they are never embarrassed. Small rooms, dark stairs, furniture out at elbows—it is all one. Even guests without a name are received with the same urbanity as more distinguished ones, if their obscurity be redeemed by good breeding and agreeability; but if they can *narrer*, *conter*, or *raconter*, with tact and spirit, success is certain, though unprepared by a previous reputation, which (they say) is necessary to ensure it to those who would adventure in the talking line in England.

CHAPTER IV.

TOURS, CONTINUED—ADVANTAGES AND DRAWBACKS—OLD MODES AND NEW ONES—REGRETS—THE LADY OF NANTUA, AND HER FAN—SAINTS AND MIRACLES—THE CHATEAU OF PLESSIS—HUNTING AND HUNTERS—LEGENDS—A SHOW OFF—THE RAPPEL—CATHEDRAL—LIBRARY AND BIBLES—THE DWELLINGS IN THE ROCKS—STRIKING VIEW AND IMMEDIATE SCENERY—THE HAMLET IN THE FOREST—COTTAGE AND CONSCIENCE PEACEFULNESS.

THIS is Pinkney's paradise; and I remember when a peep into his *camera lucida* sent crowds to the beautiful banks of the Loire. Some settled here, others were disenchanted;—still Tours possesses such a catalogue of advantages, that it will doubtless be re-peopled by fresh hordes, as soon as France has accomplished her days of purification from émeute and cholera, and can throw out her feelers, and entice fresh flies into her cheerful bosom. A fine town, a noble river, a pleasant, cheap, abundant country,—those who know it better than I do

say, a beautiful one,—with (according to report) a primitive peasantry, and a peaceful town population, are great and reasonable attractions; they are all united here, and a dissentient, like myself, feels at a loss *to show cause.*

Tours is just the sort of place to make a traveller —dropping down on it unawares—clap his hands, and cry O! and yet, for my own particular pleasure, I should prefer "the hollow valley of Bagdad," or any other valley,

"Lonely, leafy, cool, and green,"

where the birds find a pleasant home, and invite others to it with their sweet song. The *juste milieu* of a sociable country town, with its monotonous dissipations, quarrels, etiquettes, and scandal—its Paul Pry's and its Peggy Pry's—its gossips' net-work thrown over and fastening down mind and movement, and no good-natured mouse to nibble them out again, would be to me positive wretchedness. Between the individual liberty, variety, resources, and (to hermits like myself) delightful solitude of a capital, and the quiet, inestimable leisure and ready power of being alone with nature and telling her one's unworldly secrets

which the downright country affords, my inclinations find no medium.

The gentle splendour of the Loire,—tame I must think here, notwithstanding its breadth and copiousness,—gives me a desire to go along with its stream, and do justice to its higher claims. From Orleans to Nantes is (they say) all picture; but there is a shadow over Orleans,—it is not a bright word in our history, I mean our moral history; one does not dwell on it, or rather on the episode of its virgin warrior, with pleasure or with pride. Rouen is still too near, in thought at least, and that martyrdom for which we, alas! and alas! furnished the faggots.

In the provincial towns of France that are not commercial ones, there is usually a character of old-fashionedness, both about the place and the people, which, by merely standing still while other things pass on, becomes originality. At Tours, this character seems completely effaced; ladies, shops, equipages, and people, are all Parisian—to the eye at least; the capital at second hand, and the exquisite gusto lost in the re-heating. One thing, however, there is that never fails to give an

air of originality to the popular meetings in France, and that is the costume of the peasants, never quitted for the variations of fashion. Even in the very neighbourhood of Paris, the sumpter laws of the village are tenaciously adhered to, and the quaint garb which time has made historical is presented to us,—not on a pack of cards, or a tapestry arras, but fresh and living. The markets of Paris are still as full of antique caps, blue petticoats, scarlet jackets, and gold hearts with crosses at the end of them, as any in Bretagne, Provence, or Normandy. Women still steer their stubborn cavalry through the brilliant streets, seated between their panniers of grapes, or baskets of apples, in the short mantelet of whitish cloth, fortified with double capes and bound with black, just as they may do at Arles or Quiberon. This sort of variety exists at Tours, as in other places; but one looks in vain for those charming old fashions, so full and reminiscent, that still hold their day in many of the remote and by-way towns, which those who love records find so attractive; and those who do not, so flat.

I shall never forget the heavy glass-panelled

eight-inside coach, drawn by oxen and filled with gay ladies, that in one of our former peregrinations came down like a three-decker on our frail modern machine, at the issue of a cross-country road in the Bourbonnais. It was Doña Mercia's berline, in the old illustrations of Gil Blas, point for point; and as it lumbered along, sticking conscientiously to the regular ruts, brought all the intrigues of Madrid and Seville, from the European politics of the count duke to the home ones of the Scipios and Fabricios, back to the memory.

The mind will always, when a scene is new to its observation, hunt through it for other novelty, and repine when it does not find it there. In England, the capital is every where; stage-coaches, and mail-coaches, and steam-coaches, have levelled all things. The slow waggon, whose toiling progress made a journey to London from a distant province seem something akin in difficulty to an East-India voyage, is as completely gone by as Love in a Village, or the Jolly Miller; and the Dolly Madge (now Dora or Margaret) of the hamlet, fired with the desire of seeing life, springs up on

the top of the coach in a regular Oxford-street toilette, with a gay good-by to home, and a nod of recognition to the coachman. If a cottage is to be let in a remote village, the advertisement is always tailed with a notice that "coaches pass twice a-day;" if in a popular one, "every hour;" and with this rapid circulation of mind, its powers, inventions, and improvements, goes that of customs, manners, and morals,—the last not always the least susceptible of fashionable influence.

And alas! for the wassail-bowl of buttered ale, or warm lamb's-wool! It is made over to the farm house: the glistening ivy and red holly berry follow its lead; the misletoe hangs only from smoky rafters—at least I fear so; and the pie, the Christmas pie, where is it gone to? Does it still decorate the sideboard of the old-fashioned mansion? Is there still an old-fashioned mansion proud of its castle of pie-crust, within whose massive walls the huge goose, boneless and curiously seasoned, encloses the finest turkey of the soil; who, itself inlaid with ham and spices, makes room within its hospitable bosom for a hare, and perhaps a brace of pheasants, all disencumbered of their superfluities,

and in their turn affording shelter to the smaller winged things, who, buried in mushrooms and other dainty stimulants, fill up the hollows: while the immense mass, steadied—or, as the cooks say, *settled*, in a sea of savoury jelly, yields its rich slices,—in which all good things from the goose down through and through to the little birds, are marbled into a tempting mosaic,—to the old-fashioned appetite of the morning sportsman, or the supper-loving crony?

What a pity that such hearty home-customs should be sent down, like stale bread, to the kitchen! When I lived in the country, I did my best for them; and now that, like Jacob, "I dwell in the land wherein my father was a stranger," I still insist on as many pudding, pancake, and cross-bun observances as possible.

But Paris influences do not extend so far as London ones, and in getting out of that capital, one expects to get away from them; for there are still corners and customs left in France to delight the eye, I may almost say the heart,—old usages and tomb-stone figures, that comment history and have a raciness about them that makes modern ones seem

often spiritless. A grisette in an opposite shop, who arranges her hair every two minutes in a pocket looking-glass, pleases me less (though really pretty) than an old lady of Nantua, who once made our point of view in the same way; to wit, from the inn window. Talking of old things brings her before me, as she sat at the door of her dwelling on a gentle summer's evening, in the wired fly-cap and dimity negligée of other times; her blooming maid standing behind her chair, the quaint cap of the country framing in her youthful features, and in her hand the ample fan,—perhaps embellished on one side with the bower-scene of Chantilly, or the Versailles figure of a courtly Clelia, sideling her hoop along a bank of roses; or it might be with the energetic effigy of Madame Malbrouk, waving her handkerchief from the top of her tower, while a scroll held up by Cupids over her matronly head developes the first line of the ballad, the *Malbrouk, s'en va-t-en guerre*, sung by a queen,* (poor queen!) who heard it hummed over the cradle of her child, and fancying it, made its melody European. The back of the fan (only

* Marie Antoinette.

meant to meet the eye of the proprietor) had, I know just as well as if I had seen it, two full-blown roses carelessly shaded on it; stalks crossed, leaves corresponding, and two doves cooing on a spray in the middle. Mistress, maid, fan, fly-cap, and negligée, made altogether a group from Molière,—fresh too, and vivid; and with a certain courtly air about it, which old modes are apt to retain if originally of a substantial cut and quality. But in the fleeting fashions of the moment there is rarely any picture; whatever a fashion may pass into when time has fixed its identity, its immediate associations must always have more of millinery than poetry about them.

In holier times, Tours was a city of saints,—few were richer in pious men, or legends; among many, St. Martin, and St. Gregory were perhaps the most remarkable. St. Martin, son to the beautiful Helen of Constantinople, and the bold Florus, king of Hungary, belongs as much to the story-book as to ecclesiastical history: like St. Ignatius de Loyola and others of the calendar, he began life with the sword; but having bestowed the half of his cloak on a beggar, who afterwards revealed to him

that he was Jesus Christ himself, laid it down and took up the cross. Gregory of Tours, that learned chronicler and edifying prelate, modestly attributed the miracles that he himself performed, to the marvellous virtues belonging to a small portion of the dust of his canonized predecessor, which he carried about him; and so highly venerated was his tomb, that when Pepin the father of Charlemagne was dying, he caused himself to be brought to it. Clovis, too, heaped it with precious gifts, and condemned a soldier to death for having cut some of the grass that grew within its neighbourhood. It was the famous abbey of Marmoustier, founded by the same St. Martin, that possessed the chapel of the seven sleepers. The legend says, that seven nephews of the saint having been called in a vision by their already beatified uncle, fell asleep (in the language of Scripture) at the same moment, and were buried within its enclosure. Of Marmoustiers, little now remains; of Plessis les Tours, a tower, with an old house attached to it, scraped and whitewashed, and the newly furbished up walls trying to make the long roof look modern. It is a manufactory

now of something,—I think they said shot. We stopped at the gate, perhaps the same at which Louis de Tremouille at the head of four hundred gentlemen knocked boldly, demanding and obtaining from the gripe of Louis XI. the estates of which he had been unlawfully deprived. One is obliged to call up recollections here, for there is nothing thought-stirring or testifying in the place itself. The small iron wicket exists no longer, and the cages and oubliettes have vanished with their uses; which *vanishing* has (notwithstanding what I have just now said) both a thought and a blessing in it.

Fine forest-hunting (as we are told) at Tours; wolf and boar, and the fox-chase in perfection, flourishing under English patronage, some one said who meditated a compliment. This was always a famous hunting-country. Louis the Twelfth hunted here with leopards; his tremendous predecessor with rats; or rather, when he could no longer take the field himself, indulged in private rat-hunts in his own royal château of Plessis;—a sweet pastime, and withal, kingly! Ladies have doubtless hunted here in coaches; princes by torch-light: there is no end

to forest traditions in France, and tales of hunters from Clovis to Charles Dix. Legends are delicious helps to scenery, and to the mind also; for if they are not true to the letter, they are to the spirit, manners, passions, and scale of knowledge of the times to which they belong. The traditionary fables of a past age, are perhaps as faithful a record of the people who believed in them, as history is of its events.

A sweet evening tempted us to the window. Beneath it, the conductor of a diligence bundles in his customers, among whom is one very conspicuous package,—an adventurous fair, apparently under her own protection; and who, mounting up lightly, throws herself into the cabriolet, entrusting the care of an old blue mantle, edged with rabbit skin, to a fellow-passenger; while she adjusts the marmotte that confines her blowzy night-cap, with a hand meant to be the destruction of the simple-looking man who places himself beside her. Then there is a rapid huddling on of various draperies, and a look up at us with a pair of southern eyes, and a showy laugh—probably at her own thoughts, for no one seems to address her,—that displays a

set of large white teeth back to the very wise ones. I never saw any creature so full of itself, or so satisfied that all is as it should be for producing effect. Perceiving that we observe her, she turns round, and gives us a killing full-front shot, fluttering her marmotte with a kind of half-gay, half-wicked Fornarina air inexpressibly diverting, and then disappears—meteor like, perhaps to blaze out again "ere the owl hoots," as the Phœdre or Iphigénie of some village *tréteau*.

Went to bed lateish, and was hardly asleep when some troops, on their way to Nantes to frighten the Chouans, disembarked for refreshment; and with such battle-shouts and drumming, that, suddenly awaking, I thought July was come again. The loud rappel—so long the Paris *angelus*, and too familiar to be mistaken, rattled as if La Vendée was at the gates. I started from my bed, thinking that the town was up; or, at least, that Sir Hugon of Tours was galloping about in armour, (as is his custom on summer's nights); or that the Grand Veneur,—the black spectre of the forest of Fontainbleau,—had crossed the country with his phantom hounds and horns; and, opening the win-

dow, looked out: and there was Night, with such a star on her forehead! but nothing else: no tramp of feet; no sudden opening of casements; no buzzing groupes forming simultaneously,—invariable precursors of tumult in the capital; all quiet but the drums. So I returned to my bed, and while I lay there conjecturing, came Sleep, and put a finger on each eyelid; and when I awoke, the hotel was still in its place, the grisette at her shop door, and the privileged inn-beggars looking up at the windows.

The cathedral of Tours must be interesting, for such things always are so, more or less. Saint Gratien, Saint Lidoire, and Saint Gregory,* had (I believe) each a hand in it; but I, alas! have put neither hand or foot. A journey and a sprain, or something in the way of one, are with me of late almost synonymous. As soon as I begin the first, some ill-conditioned pixie usually compliments me with the second; and though I love old cathedrals as I do old oaks, or old usages,—that is dearly, yet I am obliged to content myself with the spires here, just as I tried to do at Chartres, and more-

* The patron saint of Tours.

over to forego the sight of the museum, which is said to contain some clever pictures, and of the library with its curious specimens of early printing and precious manuscripts; among which is the most beautiful of the family of illuminated bibles, the famous one of Mayence, interesting from its age and unsullied brightness; and another especially historical, on whose white vellum and gilt-lettered page the kings of France were used to take the customary oaths, as abbots and canons of the church of Saint Martin. These manuscripts are exquisite toys, triumphs of ultramarine, shell gold, and magical fingers; but when one is seriously told that a whole life has been spent on a single volume—perhaps not even sufficed for its completion, we feel disposed to ask if such rare ingenuity was given for such puny purposes. In the cathedral is a monument of two children of Charles the Eighth, reputed beautiful; and which was removed from the church of Saint Martin at the destruction of the edifice, of which nothing now remains but the tower of Charlemagne.

I have seen too little of this garden of France, this fair and fertile Touraine, to judge of its actual

beauty; but that little has rather disappointed me. Fair it is, and fertile; but not of that exceeding fairness which endues fertility with loveliness, making the latent good appear, even to the unphilosophic eye, the present beauty. While saying this, I feel how (literally) audacious it would be to set up an opinion formed on road-side views, which may, and I should think do, preface it unfavourably; just as if one were to decide on national character, or the state of society and morals in a foreign land, by the information collated during a stay of three or four days at an hotel, even with the help of an ambassador's ball, or a banker's dinner.

What we have seen appears pleasant, rather than remarkable; soft cottage scenery, that if it were spring time and the fruit-trees out, would be one sheet of blossoms; neat hedges enclosing neat gardens,—the whole country indeed a garden; and the rustic dwellings simple, rural, and just what they ought to be. The most characteristic dwellings here are not, however, the most rural; they are hollows in the rocks, where families nestle who do not love landlords or taxes, and who find commodious habitations in these natural caverns. A

long and rocky ridge leads off to the right on crossing the bridge from the town; a smoother line of hill, decked with country-houses, and made in one spot beautiful by a soft woody promontory and fine-drawn spire, follows the line of the river to the left; the ruder ridge has villas at its base, and gardens that spread out till they reach the road that lies between them and the river. At first, the eye sees nothing in this ridge but a run of rock; but, as it looks upwards and against it, something that seems like a low and rude monumental pillar becomes visible amongst the vine-stalks, or the patch of grass or grain that spreads its thin layer over its rugged surface. Another appears, perhaps close to it; a third, not far distant; and while we are wondering what they can be, and conjecturing antiquities, a thin blueish smoke rises up through the tube of old brick, or old stone-work, and discloses the secret of human habitation under the earth. On a closer inspection, a small window—perhaps two, or a larger aperture which, with the help of a ladder—or without it, as the ground happens to suit, becomes visible in the face of the rock, that sometimes rises up

perpendicularly to its highest point, and at others breaks down into a rough terrace or abrupt declivity just above the subterraneous dwelling, of whose roof long grass, gay weeds, or a few straggling vines, make a wild garden. These ready-made habitations are abundant in the rocks of Touraine, and rarely (it is said) are without inhabitants: they are commodious and, strange to say, healthy.

I have spoken of the southern line of hills on the other side of the river, and must not forget the charming view which it overlooks, and the marvellous light in which we saw it. The city and its old cathedral darkening under a mass of heavy summer clouds, which obscured the sun itself, but not the beams that rayed out broadly from beneath it, and sparkled on the wide river and its pale leafy islands; all but the town was bright,—the distant hills, the near fields; but the city sat heavily on its plains, and looked, in the stilly darkness that hung upon it, as if there was not a living soul within its walls. It is from a point close to a huge, staring château,—the most conspicuous thing on the hill, but whose name has

escaped me, that this view is best seen. As we quitted the town by the Poitiers road, the country seemed less interesting; dead flat near the town, and wet,—excellent for rice-grounds; and at a gentle distance, wooded hills with agreeable looking country-houses scattered over them. Vertumnus and Pomona may, perhaps, pass the summer there, and hang out their pretty garden pictures under the fresh shade of their bowers; but for the traveller, who drives in at one end of the town and out at the other, the immediate environs of Tours, though very agreeable, do not appear to bear out their reputation. Notwithstanding which, the by-paths in the woods (rude ones, into which my eyes would fain at this moment travel) may lead to scenes of unconjectured sweetness. The hamlet may be there, niched among the hanging boughs like a bird's-nest, with its ivied church and its swift shallow brook fringed, like old Davor's river-walk, with a quaint catalogue of garden sweets,—daisies and violets,

> "Red hyacinths and yellow daffodil,
> Purple narcissus like the morning rays,
> Pale gander-grass, and yellow culver keys,"

and wilder things in the lone forest depths amongst the miracles: for every forest in France has its charmed well, its miraculous stone; or its tree, under which a king has sat and seen visions, or a bewildered hunter encountered a weird hag who has misled, or a benevolent spirit who has guided him through its woody mazes.

We do not always know what the forest hides when we look upon it. I remember once,—it was in Worcestershire, passing a narrow forest path that zig-zagged pleasantly up a hill, and was soon lost among the trees, and proposing to my companion to follow its windings. I had often remarked its ochre line as a cheerful point in the rustic landscape; but fancied it merely a track which the wood-cutters had beaten out through the briars. It soon carried us off from the road, and through many a brake and hollow, until at last, and just as we began to think of turning back, it suddenly emerged from the thicket into a hamlet of six or eight cottages; not placed, country-dance fashion, opposite to each other, but scattered round a green spot covered with short-nibbled grass, and almost as circular as a fairy ring; one turning its

gable to the sun, another running away from it into the apple-trees; here a hawthorn bush, there a broad stumpy elder, flowering over the garden wicket. A cow gazed at herself in a still pool, and a little boy lay on his back beside her, looking up at the sky; the ground rose gently all round the hamlet, and the trees which grew on it covered the roofs with their shade.

I never saw a sweeter apparition,—and it really looked like one; for, except the little boy, there was not a human being visible,—or audible either; plenty of cock-crowing, and some flurried gabbling from a dozen or so of ducks, who had tucked their legs under them, and were warming themselves on a sunny spot, which they had made puddle of by the pool's side; but otherwise a still and sultry silence,—the silence of a summer noon, when the air seems heavy with sweetness. If I had been suddenly asked for a name for this secluded spot, I should have said *Rest;* the inhabitants were all out cutting wood, or gathering sticks, or working in the distant fields, children and all; and the babies too,—nobody left behind but the little boy and an old woman, whom we discovered spinning

in the midst of her bee-hives. She had been preparing her grandson's supper, she told us; and that being done, had sat down to her wheel to spin till his return. I never saw a more perfect picture of comeliness and cottage comfort, and of wonder, too, at seeing us in her rosemary and gillyflower garden; for no one ever rambled that way, (she said,) except now and then an autumn sportsman. There were no candles burned in the hamlet; when evening darkened, she put by her work, said her prayers, and then went to bed by the last ray of daylight,—in winter at four o'clock, or earlier. What a beautiful conscience the kind old soul must have had!

When we turned away from this pretty, unexpected scene, and had descended twenty paces through the wood, we lost sight of it entirely; and could hardly believe that the close trees, whose branches seemed knit together, hid so many homes in their bosom.

And so, having stepped over from Touraine into Worcestershire, and, as I find on looking about me, stepped back again, I shall pull off my seven-league boots, and repose a little.

CHAPTER V.

MONTBAZON—COUNTRY TO ORMES—MODERN CHATEAUX AND OLD ONES—TRAVELLERS' MISERIES—THE PLAGUE OF CUTLERY — UNEXPECTED DELICACY — CHATELLERAULT—EVENING—THE BLACKSMITH'S SHOP—STREET MOVEMENT—CASTLES OF POITOU—COTTAGES ABROAD AND AT HOME—THE BLACK PRINCE, AND THE PRINCE OF DENMARK — POITIERS—ITS CHURCHES AND ITS BATTLE-PIECE — FEODALISM IN ITS BEAUTY — RUFFEC —POLITICS AND THE PREFET—WAR AND ITS ATTRACTIONS.

MONTBAZON is prettily placed, with the ruins of a castle,—a Julius Cæsar, as they say, and a good sketch-book thing,—looking down on it. Stopped to change horses before the door of a garden-house, when the wicket opened suddenly, as the cavern did to the "sesame" of the Forty Thieves, and two tier of anxious faces appeared filling up the aperture. Below were three little French girls, tanned and crabbed, with swarthy locks and keen,

questioning eyes; and, rising above their shoulders, three others of larger growth, who we fancied were English; one gem-like and striking, the others white and doughy. There was something very innocent in the assurance with which they stared at us: a young lady brought up at a *fashionable* establishment would not have done such a thing for the world. But simplicity looks sometimes very like impudence, and precisely because it has not the internal sentiment.

We have now a cheerful and fertile country, delicately carpeted with the tender verdure of the young corn; in the midst of which fine trees, single or grouped, (oaks chiefly,) grow up and give the fields a dressed and park-like air. To cheerful and fertile may, however, be added tame, and as yet monotonous; a little variety makes itself felt as if it was something wonderful: and to-day, when we dropped into an oak dell with a soft sylvan look about it, I thought it almost romance, and could have fancied myself for an instant in one of those Surrey glens that run away from the high roads, and seem all the more lovely for their coyness.

I never saw such a bringing together of ash trees, as since we left Tours. The ash is not a generally diffused tree, like the oak or the elm, but here it is a feature in the landscape; so is the walnut, which at a distance loses its graceful shape, and looks round and formal; and the cold poplar, dear to Flemish painters, who know how to make its compact and spiral form tell as an element of calmness. Some idle women came round our carriage at Ormes, measuring us inquisitively, with a loitering yet anxious air, as if they would have given an eye or a tooth each to have known something more about us. The French are curious,—laughably so sometimes, but not ill naturedly.

Near to Ormes is a château of the Marquis d'Argenson, reputed one of the finest in France. We did not see it; one feels less disposed to go out of the straight road to see a modern château, than abdicated or ruined ones: these belong to the romance of history. Of such, as well as of the proud strong-holds, counting centuries yet still equal to the purposes of defence, France has a large proportion, as of the feudal and chivalric records which give them interest. When I see

these old towers, my fancy makes a story for them —*sotto voce;* and then I find another in my memory which displaces it, sometimes pleasantly, at others with unwelcome roughness. But still I say, blessings on those whose true taste preserves old things in their old forms! who leave old recollections in their old niches, and who do not think it necessary to repair, and paint, and decorate, until the very ghosts no longer know their favourite haunts; and, missing the antique and sullen colouring of time, and the congenial loneliness never before broken in upon by the noise of masonry, stalk off indignantly, taking with them the power which belongs to supernatural associations,—the awe of their possible, or, at least, willingly-imagined presence. For who, in wandering through the old domains of history and romance, would wish to dismiss the thought of their being still tenanted by the unseen spirits of those whose names and deeds lie holily upon them? Who would accept the change of modern finery for the gorgeous dream of imagination, or the necromancy of memory? None, certainly, of meditative mind, into whose deep thought the dead enter; none of

genuine fancy or poetic feeling; for to such those old memorials, twice consecrated—once by time, and once by story,—seem too sacred to be handed over to the profaning touch of beautifiers and repairers.

No more blue and silver jackets to-day, but post-boys fresh from the plough, who push their cattle over the smooth roads as if they were winged; if they were, it would be flying, and now it is only next door to it; but I scarcely ever saw such speed. Met some quiet farmer-looking men, jogging along with pistols in their holsters, probably fancying every bush a Chouan. Hay-making again, and grass of the true Twickenham green,—nothing parched but the women: now and then a white sail glimmering through the trees tells us that a river is near, though not in view,—the Vienne, I believe, which we have already crossed at Ormes.

Travellers' miseries are, in general, bad inns, bad roads, bad horses, and bad weather; but the misery here is the cutlery trade. Every idle girl, or bold one, who prefers spending her time at the inn-door, or on the high way, to working diligently at home, runs out with a handful of penknives as

blunt as Peter Pindar's razors, or half-a-dozen pair of rigid scissors, to persecute the unfortunate stranger, whose ill-luck may have thrown him in her way. If you stand on a balcony, she will fly up stairs to you; if you get into a carriage, she will fasten on the step,—perhaps jump in, or force you to carte and tierce with her through the window, till in despair you buy off her perseverance, for wear it out you cannot.

At Tours, an humble knock at the door announced, I thought, a conscious intruder. "C'est la petite marchande de l'hôtel," said the waiter. I tried to escape, but could not; and *la petite marchande* pushed in with her awful case of cutlery. I expected, from the introductory *formule*, some tripping thing of sixteen, easily got rid of; when a staid, middle-aged body presented herself, but the tongue was still in its teens, running as if on its first wheels, and alas! no chance of a break down. "Madame must certainly want a pair of scissors, probably a large one; or a very small, or a pocket size: perhaps a knife—a penknife, ivory, tortoiseshell, or mother-of-pearl; or a *jardiniere*, with three blades, a file, and a corkscrew." L——

produced an English one; and *la petite marchande*, turning away sorrowfully, acknowledged with a sigh that English cutlery was the best in the world,—she did not know why; perhaps it was the water; and then she sighed again. I purchased a pair of scissors, which, for the capability of cutting, might as well have been a pair of snuffers; and so got rid of her, but not of the cutlery plague in general. At Ormes a woman attacked us, saying, with incomparable effrontery, that she had come from an immense distance for the purpose of offering us her merchandise. We said that we were already provided, but she would take no excuse; and two unoccupied post-boys, who were looking on, gave it as their unbiassed opinion that it was a traveller's duty to buy every where, if it were only to stir trade.

But it was at Chatellerault that the plague was at its height. As we approached the inn, a dozen women sprang upon us like tigers,

"Fire in each eye, and *scissors* in each hand;"

and seizing the moment when we stopped before it, mounted upon chairs, (with which they were all previously provided,) and thrust the instruments of

martyrdom into the carriage, with fierce and threatening gestures that belied their petitioning words; while a chorus of voices screamed out "Knives, razors, corkscrews!—a superb pair of scissors for two francs, a magnificent leverette for fifty sous!" Then the scissors at twenty—fifteen—twelve, and the "jolie leverette" tumbling down through the decimals to eight. "Take it for eight," bawled the vendor in a tone of angry despair, "ma jolie leverette!"—it was enough to drive one mad.

Amongst those turbulent matrons—for such they seemed to be, was an elderly woman whose quiet, uncomplaining look interested me: so when we were housed, I beckoned to her from the window; and having talked with her a little, and found her to be (as I had expected) a decent and very necessitous person, put a trifle into her box, for which she appeared extremely grateful. But with a delicacy rare in such cases, would have insisted on my selecting something from her store in return; nor could I disengage myself from her entreaties till I had accepted a small penknife.

It was a pretty trait, and showed a character which neither distress, nor evil contact, could

sharpen into rapaciousness; and which, in a sphere more favourable to its developement, might have expanded into something noble. How many beautiful natures have been crushed by poverty and care, which culture and kindness might have nourished into strength and beauty! This thought brought others, and I condemned myself for having judged the poor scissor-vendors too harshly, without reflecting how severely protracted distress tries, and how often it finally warps, the best instructed and most improved minds.

But an old woman who hobbled up stairs, when we ordered tea, with a skillet in which were deposited five or six spoonsful of hot sour milk, was not so charitably disposed towards them; they were *flaneurs*, she said, who ought to be sent to the house of correction. I thought the word *flaneur* (literally *lounger*) singularly applied to these poor souls: it put me in mind of an Irish beggar-woman, whom I once heard asking alms at a shop-door for "a poor *dissolute* cripple," meaning a deformed baby that she held in her arms. In the last case, the *i. e.* was obviously *desolate;* but the *flaneur* was only "vocal to the intelligent."

We find the Vienne again at Chatellerault, flowing under a handsome stone bridge, and making an agreeable picture. Its smooth surface is covered with country craft. Long boats, of a graceful form with square sails, spread out their whiteness in the evening sun, catching the lights which, intercepted by higher objects no longer, sparkle on the current; while a water-cart, with its patient horse up to the shoulders in the river, and three grey posters knee-deep in a shallower part, lashing at the flies with their long tails, help out a quiet evening scene, transparently coloured; to which the white houses on the oppsoite quay, with their light girdling of vine-leaves, give an agreeable finish.

But the people here are the best part of the picture. Before a blacksmith's shop, that happens to be in front of our windows, a group is at this moment formed, which would give pleasant work to a quick-sketching pencil. Two rough horses, with high-padded saddles, compose its centre; one is held by a woman in the wide-lappeted cap of the country, her smoothly-divided black hair appearing under it, and a bright mixture of blue and scarlet forming the prominent hues of her dress.

A man, who had just dismounted from the other beast,—wild, olive-coloured, and picturesque as a Spanish muleteer, leans against a post; and while the blacksmith's operation is going on, gives a passing word to a venerable elder mounted on a fine mule, and inserted between two well-stuffed bales that swell up before and behind him. His beaver is aristocratically large, his coat pale fawn-colour, waistcoat light blue, and stockings a pure country white. While they talk, the horse is shod; and the woman, springing up like the false Teresa Panza on her steed, throws one leg over the saddle, and fixing herself firmly in the seat, unfolds a large cloth petticoat, split up behind and before, ties it on, and letting it fall over each side, presents the most decent appearance possible.

Charming old carriages; an inappreciable *demi-fortune*,* as large as a town coach and a half, just passes, drawn by a superb mule; and in it a fair creature reading in the midst of five or six others, with a full-blown rose—a natural one—in her hair. Carts, all drawn by oxen; no horses, were they as

* A light landau, chariot, or other family vehicle, drawn by one horse.

plump and mottled as the best ever turned out by Rubens, could become a country cart as oxen do. Horses—fine ones especially, seem misapplied when used for the slow purposes of agriculture: oxen are the cattle of the field, as horses are of the desert, though we have tamed them down to the stall and the harness. Every moment some merry lassie, or grave dame, jogs, by on her mule, the split petticoat thrown scrupulously over her muscular proportions, and a freight of brooms or other household articles strapped behind; for this being market-day, all are purchasers. Two girls on one horse, both very smart and one pretty, with a lappeted matron brown and fierce as a Cherokee chief in the van, trot down the street at this moment; the girls chattering like two plotting magpies, and the matron every now and then turning round her copper-coloured visage to see that all is right, and the green cloth petticoat duly arranged.

To-day, oak-woods and oak-copses, and the park-like air which we sometimes remarked yesterday, and which the fashion of planting single trees in the midst of vast unenclosed fields often gives to this country, continued; hamlets in woody spots,

and châteaux scattered about, and flanked with turrets like an old-fashioned cruet-stand. The high nobility of Poitou are faithful Carlists, and live feudally within their unmodernised domains, in the fond indulgence of hope, or the fruitless one of regret. Neighbour to the Boccage, in position as in sentiment, the lord is still chief; and the vassal faithful and devoted, happy in the protection which he feels ready to repay with life, and proud of his fealty as others of their independence.

I love a cottage, or a farm-house, in the midst of fields, with the corn at the door, and the apple-trees beside it. We saw many such in Touraine; but, generally speaking, single habitations are not much to the taste of the French peasant, who is gregarious, and prefers the stony and stringy village, where the social virtues can be duly exercised; where there are talkers, and listeners, and winter-evening gatherings at one neighbour's or another, till each has provided room, light, and fuel, in his turn. The lonely cottage, (whose simple inhabitants little dream of the romantic fancies awakened by the sight of their rude dwelling,) or the cheerful one, flower-hung and sunny, with the

morning dew sparkling on its thatch, are not the common country dwellings of France, though the last are oftener met with in the part we have recently passed through, than in any other that I can at this moment call to mind. I have talked of cottages, but even the best here are seldom like our home ones, with the garden-fence of hawthorn, and the small garden itself dressed out in stocks and sweet-williams, and the bower of woodbine all clammy with honey-dew, and set round with sober scabious, and that pretty blue flower which may, perhaps, have a gentler name than devil-in-the-bush—the one I used to know it by in my childhood; and the black currant and full-blossomed syringa, whose leaf tastes, as the gammers say, like cucumber.

Yet this is pleasant scenery,—or seems so to us, who, having looked long at pavement and town frees, and put up with the lilacs and laburnums of a Champs Elysées garden, find a charm in the aspect of the country which, like the sense of being to a free and healthfully organized mind, is in itself enjoyment. Besides, where there are no recollections of a higher kind, the eye contents itself with

little, and cheerful mediocrity spreads out its means effectually.

This historical Poitiers (which has no higher reputation now for beauty than in the time of Madame de Motteville, and a very poor one too for cleanliness) is charmingly approached. At one side rocks and woods, with cottages hung about in them, and a wild luxuriance of parasitical vegetation over-running the stony masses; at the other, the Clain gliding through tufted banks and flowery meadows. Thought of the old wars of France and England, and, as matter of course, of the Black Prince, whose wild and gloomy appellation suited the character of the times, and its savage though romantic spirit. I have never been able to make out what there is in this same name, that always makes my fancy bestow the attribute of youth upon its possessor. History talks of forty and some odd years; but I can never push the dark-armoured hero beyond the romantic point of eight or nine and twenty. The sound of the Black Prince never will come to my ear with a grey hair in it. It is the same with Hamlet; but this is a more general feeling, for who ever believed, even on his own

authority—or acquiescence, for he never contradicts the grave-digger,—that he had calendared thirty years; or on his mother's, that he was "fat and scant of breath;" or ever fancied him other than a youth recent from Wittenberg,—thoughtful, philosophizing, sometimes sad, but still the young prince, and almost student: which illusion must be owing to something in his name; for, though it is true that his uncle talks of school, yet so does he himself of three and twenty years ago as of a fresh recollection: so one may be allowed to balance the other, even without the mature additions of fat and shortwindedness.

Saw little or nothing of Poitiers,—little even of its general appearance, and nothing of its Roman relics, its amphitheatre, or other fragments; nothing of its vast cathedral, its ancient churches—Ste. Radegonde, St. Hilaire, and St. John; all (as it is said) exceedingly curious; as being amongst the earliest specimens of sacred architecture; but the church of Nôtre Dame la Grande is deemed the most remarkable. These old churches, in the early *gotico Lombardo* style, or in that which came before it,—simple and even sometimes rude within, but

overcharged externally with statues, bassi relievi, rich tracery, elaborate fret-work, scrolls, foliage, rosettes, columns twisted, fluted, knotted, growing out of the backs of beasts such as Ezekiel dreamed of, are often fuller of interest than the more elegant structures of later times. However, the day being hopelessly wet, and our way merely skirting the town, we have left its sights for a future occasion;* but it seemed well perched, and to one who, like myself, is a lover of battered old towns and high-spirited recollections, curious and interesting.

About five or six leagues from Poitiers, and on the river Vonne, is the little town of Lusignan, famous once for its castle known in history, and to which the fairy Melusina,—a most remarkable person, at once serpent and woman, daughter, as she is called by some, of the twelve tribes of Israel; or of the king of Cyprus and Jerusalem, as she is styled by others, but always princess and magician,—has given a romantic celebrity; and two

* And another has since presented itself; when its ecclesiastical treasures were pointed out to us by the kindness of the préfet, to whose politeness and intelligence we were much indebted.

leagues from the town are the plains of Maupertuis (no longer however known by that name,) where the great battle of Poitiers was fought, and the king of France made prisoner. There rang the cry of Montjoie—St. Denis! answered by that of St. George—Guyenne! and there did the Black Prince speak so wisely and plausibly to his somewhat disheartened army, (then preparing for the battle,) that they were *reconfortés*. There fell the Oriflamme, and a great spirit with it;* and many thousand valiant men found passage for their souls that day!

The ultra-carlist character of the country, and its vicinity to La Vendée, sharpen the vigilance of the police most provokingly. Such a passport scrutiny as we have to go through at every hamlet! just as if we were the old Bourbons themseves,—we who are as innocent of Charles Dix as we are of Pharamond. Remarked at Couhé some very pretty girls, with oval faces and sparkling eyes; women much better looking than in the Paris direction: no more bulbous noses, but a fine drawn gentility of features, and a soft and very

* Geoffrey de Charney.

agreeable southern colouring. A rich country onwards, wide fields of waving grain; and the most splendid chestnuts imaginable, vying in magnitude and beauty with the oak, and opposing their deep and full-bodied green to the pale transparent verdure of the walnut. Surface agreeably varied with frequent hills, softly wooded in the distance.

Still too near to La Vendée; big looks and blustering every where. At Chaunay, a soldier of the Garde Urbaine, petticoated like a Drury-lane centurion, barred our passage with fixed bayonet, eyeing us suspiciously, and rather as if he had private reasons for believing us dangerous characters. It is impossible to find oneself touching on this country of "the West," without a feeling of respect, even though it may not be one of actual sympathy. There was so much good faith and hearty courage in the old Vendeans of —93, that however opinions may differ as to the merits of the cause, their beautiful devotion to it,—a devotion of sacrifice offered in perfect faith,—must ever be remembered with honour.

Whether the Chouans of the present day are of the same stock, feeling the same intense sentiment

of allegiance, fighting with the same unity of hearts and purpose; or whether, as their enemies will have it, a robber spirit of gain, or an assassin one of vengeance, has in too many instances displaced the original holiness of belief and motive, I am not competent to decide. But the old Vendeans, those brave peasants who had become warriors from faith and love, who left their fields untilled to gird on the sword and follow their lord, or their lord's children, to the battle, were of an undoubted mould. They had never quitted the shelter of their woods, had never been any thing but quiet burghers of the forest; yet went out boldly to fight for the cross of their faith, which their pastors told them was in danger, and for the children of Saint Louis, to whom they had sworn fealty; and whose chief they in their simplicity still, perhaps, imagined giving laws under the great oak of Vincennes with his crown on his head, the holy Evangelist on his knee, and his royal mantle, wrought over with golden bees, on his kingly shoulders.

I am no politician; but I can hardly imagine any one of a fine and admiring mind, however op-

posed its views and feelings may be to the views and feelings which actuated this ardent and primitive people, reading the charming memoirs of Madame de la Rochejaquelin without a sentiment that joins itself to the simple and pious enthusiasm of those new crusaders of the west; or approaching a spot, where the sweet and secluded aspect of nature was fellowed by the pure lives of those who were nursed in its bosom, without lingering for a moment in thought, perhaps in fondness, on its story.

But little of the romance of war now remains; of its parade, however, we have more than enough. Peace is my delight, but the apparel of strife meets the eye every where. Even here at Ruffec, drums rattle, trumpets sound, troops change quarters, préfets compliment commanders, and commanders extol préfets, each sprinkling his oration with a few loyal allusions to keep the next door neighbours in order. A review has just now taken place; and by and by there will be a dinner,—a loyal, patriotic, mixed monarchy dinner, in which of course, as this inn of Ruffec has a high gastronomic reputation, all the produce of the hot

south will be set forth scientifically. In the mean time, the troops defile before Monsieur le Préfet, who nods approbation, graciously overlooking the ill-assorted appearance of the country lads, who have wedged themselves into the ranks in their flapped hats and short jackets,—mountain free-booters rather than soldiers in the outward man, and probably much more like the real William Tell, than the Austrian officer with hessian boots and ostrich feather, who represents that brave peasant, not only at opera-houses in general, but on the walls and sign posts of his own native Switzerland.

And now the show is over: the préfet has made his last speech, and the people, tossing up their hats in the air, shout "Vive notre préfet!" upon which his honour, a natural man I suppose, waves his beaver, and huzzas with the crowd.

In these and similar consolations, (such as they are,) the calamities of war are often forgotten; and though the story which the high-spirited boy hears from his maimed father may be a sorrowful one; or more sad still, the one with which a widowed mother checks for a little while the riotous current of his

young blood, and tames it into not unsweet, though premature staidness, still the drum and the trumpet—and alas! the fringe and the feather, will excite those who have ardour, and seduce those who have vanity. If to defend that which is dear and sacred,—the palladium of liberty or the home of love, so be it,—and may blessings go with them! but if to learn the mysteries of vice and pipe-clay in the barracks of a country town, or wear out life, perhaps lose it, on a distant and pestilential shore, to forfeit the reality of independence, and be flogged out of the sentiment of honour,—better to labour in the fields, and die in peace amongst them.

To all which the answer is, and ever will be this, —there are certain things that must be done, and people must be found, bought, coaxed, or excited to do them.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EVE OF ST. JOHN—ANGOULEME—A MITRED MUSE AND A GOSSIPING CHAMBER-MAID—FAMILY CUSTOMS—THE IMITATIVE FACULTY—DESCENT FROM ANGOULEME—CAVIGNAC — FETE-DIEU — TWO SIDES OF THE CANVAS—THE BOUQUETS OF THE FETE-DIEU—THE EFFECT OF THE CEREMONY ON THE MIND—OUR NEIGHBOUR—ANTICIPATIONS — CUBZAC — THE FERRY-BOAT AND ITS CARGO—BORDEAUX AND OLD ITALY.

EVERY house from Ruffec to Angoulême is garnished with green boughs in honour of St. John. There is no saint in the calendar whose fête is kept with such sweet and simple testimonials, as those which custom has consecrated to the eve of St. John,—the patron of shepherds, the particular saint of the valleys and the hills; he who preached in the desert, whose raiment was of camel's hair, and his meat locusts and wild honey. I would not tell to every one all that I think of when I hear the canticle of St. Ambrosius sung by the shepherds; and see the bonfires on the mountains,

or along the still sea-shore, and look at the children dancing round them, and the flames blazing or dying on the sky, or scattering their uncertain fire from some lonesome strand in stars upon the summer's evening sea. The boughs and nosegays, too, tied up in the form of a cross and hung upon the doors to keep the witches out, have something innocent and believing in them that delights my heart; and so do the rustic gatherings—more frequent on this night than on any other of the year, where piety is cheerful, and the young spirit of festivity remembers in the midst of its enjoyment that it is a holy eve,—the vigil of his birth who came to bear record.

As we advance towards Angoulême, we get amongst vines, but not amongst vineyards: there are few regular ones; grain and vines alternate like the stripes of a ribbon. Many small woods and scattered trees, but the fine single ones have staid behind with the god Mars, of whom we hear nothing more at present. The town of Angoulême is next door to the sky. I can only judge of it from the dull specimen of the faubourg in which the Hôtel de la Poste happens to be situated; but I should think it must be finely

placed. It has a view,—a celebrated one, over the valley of the Char, and which all travellers (we are told) run up to see; but as the ascent is out of the question for me this evening, I shall quietly wait the opinion of my advanced guard. Wide and showy, is the report; from which I conclude, that its beauties have more of display than interest, and very possibly may be doing them injustice, for the country is rich and varied, and a soft landscape opens beneath, which the town domineers episcopally.

This word episcopal, which so especially suits those lofty sites, where the cathedral has outlived the castle, and the priest the chieftain, recals to my mind that pious bishop—and afterwards saint—of Angoulême,* who, being also a poet, wrote a certain allegory, entitled *Pipée, ou la Chasse du Dieu d'Amour;* in which Beauty is maid of honour to the Queen of Love, Youth her ambassador, Espoir de Jouir her grand falconer, Hardiesse her counsellor, and Déduit Joyeux her *maître d'hôtel.* The path to her Château de Plaisance is by the Verger d'Amour, the road De l'Espérance,

* St. Gelais, Bishop of Angoulême.

the forest De Gracieux Désirs; but the stag who has run away with her heart, (which he wears on his antlers) lurks in the Buisson de Tristesse. Such were the laudable recreations of a mitred muse in the beginning of the fifteenth century. Nothing, in those good days of the church, was considered unseemly, unless it was heretical; nothing either of speech or action was prohibited to the faithful; while a careless word, or a thought falsely interpreted, ensured to the suspected the honours of the Inquisition. The cathedral of St. Pierre has a high reputation amongst the old churches of France; but I can vouch for nothing but my faubourg,—my knowledge of Angoulême extending no farther. It must have a fine look out, but seems a still place,—no longer the Angoulême of the old rejoicing times when the Black Prince held his court there, with "grand foison de Cheualiers et d'Escuyers;" but it is not without its attractions, and rare ones too, if what a communicative chambermaid who runs in and out much oftener than necessary, informs me be true; for, according to her account, the ladies of Angoulême are singularly beautiful; fresh, too, as May-dew, and

otherwise exceedingly engaging; all owing—I mean the beauty and freshness—to the purity of the air. They are also *coquettes, pas trop,* but enough to set off their natural advantages. I have no means of ascertaining the limits of the *pas trop;* probably moveable ones, like the hurdles of a sheep pen, which can be pushed backwards and forwards according to circumstances.

The children of the house have been fête-ing their father (who is a Jean) according to the pretty family custom in France, where the saint's-day of each member of a family is marked by certain kindly and well-wishing tokens. I love every thing that draws together the ties of kindred, and commemorates the progress of time by acts of affection. The bouquet of the fête-day has something sweeter in it even than its perfume; and though this ancient usage may, on some occasions, dwindle into empty ceremony, as others of still more reverend origin often do, yet it is based on gentle, I may almost say pious feelings. The little girl had a nosegay, and the boy a drawing (a head of the patron saint) for their father, and he had a kiss a piece for them, and a cordial embrace for his wife

who set the jet d'eau in the garden playing in honour of his arrival, for he had been out all day on duty as a National Guard. When I met her just now, and observed, by way of saying something, that this was a great holiday, she replied, "Oui, Madame, c'est la fête de mon mari," evidently thinking more of her husband than of the saint. I was exceedingly struck with the graceful way in which this loving wife presented her little daughter to me, and with her general manners; good breeding, and even refinement, are very frequently met with in France where one does not exactly expect to find them; but a want of habitual delicacy sometimes surprises one less pleasingly.

There is one faculty very remarkably developed in almost every French woman; and that is, the power of adjusting herself to any change which chance may make in her position. I recollect a foreigner once saying, when a very beautiful girl in humble life was the subject of conversation, "She is able to be a duchess:" almost every young woman in France, who is not of the downright hardworking class, is able to be a duchess, should the opportunity offer; at least as far as the power

of adopting the outward air and current manner (and usually without exaggeration) goes. A French woman is seldom devoid of a pretty kind of gracefulness, which in all situations she knows how to turn to account. Our women are not so flexibly organized; and perhaps the perfectly simple manners of an English woman of high-birth and high breeding, whose good taste has preserved her from affectation, may be more difficult to catch and imitate successfully, than the more studied and cadenced courtesies of a Parisian in the same class of life.

The people here, though inured to the fervours of an almost southern climate, begin already to complain of heat, and seem much more alive to its inconveniences than we are. To us the light air, just quick enough to stir the leaves, feels still deliciously fresh; but while we revel in its day-break sweetness, they cry out "quelle chaleur!"—yet, while thus complaining, the peasant women strut about in strong cloth cloaks, and the men would be called sensible dressers in Lapland. A fine descent after leaving our *triste faubourg*, with the valley and the river that flows through it opening

to the right; and to the left the town making a stepping-stone to the sky, its girdle of walls supported on rocks, and its rocks on slopes of verdure. Down below, a rich country with soft woody ridges and cheerful fields, in which the sweet, pleasant work of hay-making is going on: as we advance, some pretty bits, and some meagre ones; but the last not often. The meadows, hedges, and single trees, make us think of England; and the flowers that grow in the green nooks and under the looping briars, of many things which

> If present,
> Would be pleasant;
> But being gone,
> Make moan.

Another touch of England:—cows feeding at liberty in the fields, or browsing among the tufts of purple thyme, that glow like amethysts on the banks by the road-side I have often regretted that the sight of cattle, free from the trammels of the girl and the string, should be so rare a feature in French landscape, that when it does present itself it is noticed rather as a remarkable one. I do not mean to say that this is the case in all parts of France, but in many.

June 25th. Arrived at Cavignac (a village and a poste) in the midst of the fête-dieu. Streets strewed with rushes, large nosegays of the showiest flowers, arranged in the form of a cross and attached to every door, reposoirs at decent intervals, and the whole population in movement. As the *grand* reposoir was erected in front of the post-house, we had a full view of the solemnity; and if it lacked the measured pomp and lofty ceremonial which wealth and power confer on the same rite at Paris, the deficiency was more than compensated by the spirit and originality of the picture.

First came the devout women of the village, with stern and reproving countenances; and over their heads shawls so disposed, as to take the fold which the old painters give to the veil of the Madonna. At each side of these holy personages moved a confused crowd of female peasants, each with a very white and very wide cap; on the front of which a handkerchief, largely folded and of the most glowing colours, was laid flatly, so as to advance from the forehead and throw a shade on the face. As the procession approached the reposoir, all knelt down, the women forming a crescent at

each side, and spreading the ground with their ample garments of yellow, dark green, deep azure, and that full matchless red which so brightly vivifies the dress of the French peasant.

At the other side were the men, more closely grouped, old ones chiefly and bald, with clasped hands and believing countenances; simple and pious rustics, whose hearty faith was (I thought) more edifying than the conventional drone of the officiating priests. But the women were the rich bits of the picture, kneeling with their tanned hands clasped together, and their dark, and sometimes very striking faces inclined downwards under the shade of the folded handkerchief. One very young girl, sunned into a rich copper-colour, but with fine expressive features, and a grave devotional air that contrasted singularly with her slim and childish figure, was the very Egyptian Mary of Carravagio. Altogether, the lights and shadows, grouping and effect, were admirable.

But here ended the picture, and the interest; all the rest was profanely paltry. An old man, with two dustman's bells, out of which he struck most inappropriate music, preceded the standard

of the cross; two children followed, dressed like mummers, one holding a toilette pincushion,—though dishevelled,—and otherwise arranged, to image Mary Magdalen; the other, a trumpery glass box, with a sixpenny nativity in wax in it, but evidently, by a fragment of sheepskin pending from the shoulders and a distracted desert wave given to the hair, himself the representative of the Baptist. Then came a rabble of boys, some in dirty surplices, others bare-footed, regulated by a young priest more noisy even than his flock; and enclosing the whole, a double file of patches in their working jackets, with rusty fire-locks on their shoulders. The commander of the faithful alone wore a uniform, and flourished his sword in the teeth of his ragged regiment; the chief magistrate wore a sword also, and a tri-coloured scarf, in which last fashion he was followed by his adjunct, who, being a proper Sancho Panza and sorely encumbered with flesh, could not conveniently kneel, so squatted down on a mound in front of the more supple pietists, like a Mandarin on the lid of a tea-pot.

As to the troops, they had quite enough to do

to take care of their fire-locks and personal safety, without thinking of their devotions; but the commander was edifying. When the ceremony was over, and the Egyptian Marys and Elizabeths, with the women of Endor—for there was more than one witch amongst them—had disappeared; the mistress of the poste and her handmaids, set about stripping the reposoir; and the lady, selecting three of the most effective bouquets presented them to us with a Parisian slope of the body, observing that they had been blessed,—"et cela embellit toujours."

Yet, notwithstanding its occasional paltriness, and more than occasional ostentation, there is something in the fête-dieu—not the town procession, but the village one—which I greatly love. Something so imposing in the measured chaunt, the bells hailing with solemn yet joyful sound the passage of the Host, the clouds of incense mounting skywards like the incense of the heart, the perfume scattered by young and innocent hands before the glittering canopy, the propitiation of prayer, the heart-opening of thanksgiving, the pious abstraction of the aged and the chil-

dren, that I have often—not only felt my imagination affected, but my heart touched by its solemnity. On one side are the old, who stand on the threshold of eternity, and to whom faith is all things; on the other the young, who by their innocence still belong to heaven, both holding fast by hopes and promises sincerely indulged, and devoutly trusted in; but which, in the middle stage of life, are too often slighted and forgotten Their piety is touching,—there is comfort in it.

Years have passed away since; but I still remember with pleasure the pious bustle of the good folks at ——, when the droning murmur, faintly heard at a distance, deepened into the full bass that announced the approach of the procession; and have not forgotten the cordial feeling which the display of our best carpets on the walls excited towards the English heretics. A Swiss protestant, who was our neighbour, and one of those hard men who "will not give the spirit of God leave to breathe through the pipe it pleases," used to grumble at an act of complaisance, which he (who preserved his carpets as a beauty does her complexion) affected to think a culpable one. To

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have closed our gates, or stood at them deridingly, he would have considered far more fitting; but it has always seemed to me, that if we are bound—and that we are, who can doubt?—when we intrude upon the ceremonies of a mosque, or thrust our faces into a Jewish synagogue, to abstain from insulting those rites which others deem holy; how much more incumbent does the observance of decency become in a Christian land, where the same belief lives in all hearts, though the form by which it manifests itself be different! To this our Swiss neighbour would have answered, (having the wear and tear of the carpets before his eyes), that to insult, was one thing; to countenance, another. In law affairs, acquiescence is, I believe, considered as complicity; but in matters of mere benevolent feeling, where neither a great truth or a revered opinion is called in question, the acquiescence of kindness may surely be permitted.

How many anxious thoughts do anticipators give to misfortunes which never arrive! It is an odd fancy that of taking troubles at interest; yet many have it, and love to give it to others who are more hopingly disposed than themselves. Be-

fore we left Paris, we had heard so much of the misery of travelling southwards in the hot months, that nothing but the imperious necessity which compelled our journey, could have prevented us from giving it up altogether.

"Have you ever travelled in summer through the south of France?" was a question always put in a tone of commiseration, and sure to be followed by "such heat!" ejaculated pityingly, with a turn up of hands and eyes, and a specification of evils which there was no possibility of escaping,—exhaustion, inflammation, a daily broil half as hot as a martyrdom, and perhaps a brain fever in perspective. Yet here we are, almost at Bordeaux, after the most delightful journey imaginable, bowling-green roads, cheerful scenery, and such a climate as one might expect to find in the island of Madeira.

This is the 26th of June; and yet there is a freshness in the air, an elasticity, that has a perceptible effect on the mind. I had anticipated a heavy, sultry atmosphere, pressing like lead upon the spirits, or else a sky of fire; but it is vernal, and of itself enough to make one in love with the

south: we have had no dust, and the hedges are as green as when they first budded. Other years may tell other stories, and the southern June may sometimes merit all the fiery tales told of it, but this June (at least the latter part of it) has been one long spring day.

At Cubzac, we found the ruins of a castle three parts demolished—and with man's help, I should think, probably for the materials; but still producing a mellow effect: warm masses of stone, with a luxuriant covering of fig and ivy on some of the stray fragments. Embarked in a ferry-boat to cross the Dordogne, a river here of noble breadth and poor accompaniments, but just as we were pushing off, arrived the *malle poste*, and detained us nearly half an hour, a delay to which the Gascon blood of one of our post-boys could by no means accommodate itself. Some men in office about the boat particularly excited his displeasure, to which he gave such vehement utterance, that his words rushed out four abreast without order of precedence. He asked but five minutes—three would do—to be alone with his adversary, and he promised himself the pleasure of strangling him hand-

somely. But the words were moonbeams compared to the accompanying gestures; every movement was a spasm, every look had half a dozen murders in it: when suddenly, having thrown off his foam and finding himself unanswered, and as he thought unanswerable, he turned like the tide, and ebbed into gentleness.

At length we got off, with a true Murillo beggar, a young Bordeaux shopman who did all he could to sink the counter in a "swashing outside," and the malle poste company. Our ferry-boat was no relation to that

> - - - "fatal and perfidious bark,
> Built in the eclipse;"

but an unwieldy machine, heavy and helpless as a sleeping porpoise, propelled by wheels set in motion by six worn-out horses, blind as Belisarius and chosen so expressly, who plod on in their eternal circle, all the more tranquilly for not being able to look about them. When we landed, a woman came to us, offering cherries for sale; she had probably been seasoning the marmite, and smelt as thymy as a fillet of veal—country stuffing, with a due mixture of sage and onion; in short, a perfect

plat aux fines herbes, and greatly to the taste of our volcanic post-boy, who ogled her with an air half bold, half tender, that was infinitely diverting.

I have very splendid notions about Bordeaux, and cannot help fancying it (arts apart) something between old Venice and the Florence of the merchant Medicis. This *arts apart* includes, however, on reflection, a terrible deal; and then the prodigious recollections, and their amazing power over the mind,—a power which has outlived the palms and triumphs, yet still perpetuates them. Bordeaux has its high recollections too, heroic, chivalric, and poetic ones; but they have strayed into the vineyards, and been all but lost there. The bold knights of the fourteenth century give way to Guestier or Mackarty, Sir Huon yields to Johnston and Sons, and the house of Barton has effaced Ausonius.

Yet still I have my illusions, though I hardly know from whence they come; for besides the arts and the great glories, which still stick so closely, either in presence or in thought, to the great commercial cities of old Italy, there must be many of these smaller points wanting here which, like the

vase of water on the table, the lily in the lady's hand, the pearl in her ear, or the greyhound on the carpet,—I am speaking of a picture,—catch the light, and by judiciously diffusing or concentrating its power, heighten the general effect, to which they are subordinate ministers. If the people of their great days have passed away from Florence, Genoa, and Venice, the traces, and more than the traces, of their habitation remain. We may traverse their galleries, meditate in their halls, enter into their secret chambers, repose on the very seats where their wisest have thought, and breathe in the identified spots where their noblest have acted. The altars, the palaces, the statues, are still there; and if their women now flutter in French bonnets, un-italianizing as much as possible their fine and characteristic faces, the sweet and sedate mothers of their race still live, benignly gorgeous, on the walls of their fathers' homes.

CHAPTER VII.

BORDEAUX—COUP D'ŒIL—ITS SHOWS—CATHEDRAL—ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH AND CRYPT—THE GIANTS OF BORDEAUX—WOMEN—STYLE OF BEAUTY—DRESS—MY TITIAN—GREEN AND VIOLET—THE QUAYS AT BORDEAUX AND AT PARIS—BEAUTY AGAIN—THE LADY OF BORDEAUX—ITS GREAT MEN.

The approach to Bordeaux is along a plain, calling itself La Bastide, not a thirty-seven leaguer, like the Vega of the Moorish Grenada, but half enclosed by pleasant hills, well studded over with compact country houses, and garnished with vineyards, small shrubby plantations, and flower-knots, just now prodigal of bloom, and in exquisite order. Our first view of the city was a distant one, and too flat to be striking,—I was going to say; but have just recollected that a city, marked out only by its spires and cupolas, standing up in the centre of a vast plain, has often a lordly look, an air of unshared dominion at once proud and lonely; and I have seen towns on the level bank of a river,

whose steeples seemed to rise out of the water like the masts of many vessels anchored in close neighbourhood, produce a fine and imposing effect: but this first look was, I thought, common-place.*

A nearer view, however, mends matters, and displays the city in its greatly-admired and finest point of view, forming an irregular semicircle, of a prodigious span, that follows the bend of the Gironde. The quays are of a noble breadth, and the buildings which, taken as a whole, have a very handsome appearance, present a long façade of a bold and showy aspect; the river is superb, broad, free, and graceful; and the bridge which the genius of Dechamps has thrown over its impetuous current, is not only a supposed impossibility overcome, but a splendid and useful monument obtained.

All this sounds fine, and really is so. But I had imagined Bordeaux spread out airily over an amphitheatre of bright hills, and find it turning

* There is no being literal,—or at least remaining so, where préfets are active, or deputies watchful of the interests of their constituents, or the splendour of their departmental capital. The road which used to creep at the bottom, is now carried over the hills; and the first burst of city, river, sails, and spires, is splendid.

its back to the sun, and lying at full length along the flat bank of the river. Besides it is, or seems to me to be, something like the wooden towns which were run up in the Crimea to cheat the Empress Catharine's eyes with a false show of population. The extent is exceedingly imposing, and the coup d'œil strikingly fine; but the backward reach does not seem to me proportionate to the three miles' length; and the gorgeous river decoration, which prepares the mind for the wedged depths of a great and crowded city, appears when looked at from the bridge to be backed like a fine scene in a play, just enough to keep it steady, and afford, through the prescribed openings, the necessary distance. Were it not for the old church and tower of St. Michael, and the fine-drawn spires of St. Andrew, there would be nothing, or almost nothing, visible behind the front screen. But for this want of elevation in the back ground, the coup d'œil would be perfect: a more advantageous point of view might perhaps be obtained from the opposite heights.

I do not mean to say that Bordeaux is not a large city, and a crowded one, but merely that the proportions are not kept—to the eye at least,

in the first general view. There are many very striking things here. Of these the theatre, the great hospital, the préfecture, the fine (though short) street Le Chapeau Rouge, the quays, bridge, river—already named, are the most remarkable. A promising new quarter is now in progress; but there are good things here, too, that are not new, beginning with a fine old cathedral, grim and black, having a rich portal elaborately carved, and six leering bishops niched in it, with whose society I was obliged to content myself while I waited at the porch for my more effective companions. I cannot quote my churchmen as lively company, though there was a thought-exciting power, too, about them, but as friends. O that we could always find living ones that (life excepted) were like them! so safe, patient, secret, and unchanging: and not bad counsellors either;—none are who belong to the past, and convey in an unobjectionable shape its salutary lessons.

The next church on the show list is St. Michael's (very old) with its tower apart, as it sometimes is in Italy. There are others, too, said to be curious from their antiquity, and some fragments of a

Roman amphitheatre, and other relics of the past, but not numerous or, I believe, of high interest. At St. Michael's there are vaults that possess the quality of retarding the progress of decomposition, and within which one who did not fear the shadow of death, remained locked up for hours, noting down by the light of a melancholy lamp its infinitely various aspects of (as he said) "distress, disappointment, dread, misery, and even desperation," in what he calls his book of *sketches*—I of *thoughts*. Then pausing to listen to the retreating steps of the old woman who had consented to lock him in, and to the sullen grating of the door as he closed it after her; and thinking, as he raised his eyes to the grim and awfully-expressive figures that stood bolt upright against the walls,—the cast off garments of the great mystery! horrible in their eyeless, voiceless mockery,—how he might chance to fare, should any accident befal, or cause her to forget him. He had no provision but a piece of bread, and the sight of that startled him,—there were many thoughts, and painful ones, in it; but he worked on, and when the day was past she came again, and let him out of his prison. Among the bodies is that of a

boy supposed to have died of hunger; his hands seem to tear into his side; near to it is one whose last agonies have left the terrible expression of the sardonic laugh upon his hollow features; and another—a woman once, but some hundred years numbered with the dead, whose teeth still glisten! There are awful lessons in this vault, and profound ones, but the sight is distressing; the outrageous, the unpitying, the despairing aspect made permanent, no shade, no light, no softening, always the same dreadful look! If the smile of an angel was to be suddenly fixed and made eternal, it would become at last shocking. Saw the gorgeous portal of the very old church of Sainte Croix encrusted with fret-work, and the richly sculptured one of St. Saturnine,—curious specimens of the old lavish style of sculpture.

Every thing here is on a scale approaching the grandiose, or attaining it: the hospital appears, from its great size to have been intended for the general depôt of all the bodily infirmities of the department. The *within* of a hospital, however beneficent its purposes and wise its administration, must always be a doleful lazar-house; yet still

beautiful in its uses as a haven to the forlorn and the suffering, who there find all the means of relief which care and science can afford; but the *without* is here cheerful and inviting, and the appearance of several sisters of charity, passing in and out under the portico when we stopped before it, gave gratifying assurance that kind, tender, and pious women nursed and comforted the sick,—as such women only can nurse and comfort,—with the moral courage which can subdue disgust, (unconquerable usually but by profound affection,) and the devotedness which a true feeling of religion inspires. In the rosary of virtues, these magnanimous women are the large beads; and the sight of their serene yet active figures, often makes me look into myself with humble and reproving feelings.

But they have taken me away from the giants of Bordeaux just as I was getting within sight of the theatre, which out-giants every thing in its way at Paris. It is now under repair and closed; but judging from its exterior dimensions, one should suppose that the antique mask and mouth-piece might be wanting within. The streets too are unusually broad for a southern town; the cafés, I am

told, make *petits pavillons* of those of the capital, and the houses, though the basement story is often appropriated to the reception of wine-casks, or (as in Naples and some other Italian cities) to the exercise of mean trades, are spacious and handsome; others stand aloof from such unseemly association, and most have the large balconies that break so agreeably the dull monotony of a brick or stone wall. But nothing seems bound together; every thing looks scattered and wildish,—an effect much increased by the quantity of building materials strewn about every where, and by the present whiteness (no rain for six months) of the ground. These disadvantages may be only casual, but they are unpleasantly demonstrative, and greatly spoil the general view.

Bordeaux possesses all the public institutions which should distinguish a town of its importance; a royal college, a royal academy, a library containing many curious MSS.—among others, a copy of Montaigne's Essays, with his own marginal notes; schools of medicine, botany, painting, &c.; and several societies—literary, scientific, and experimental. It possesses, also, a very remarkable

female population. To the casual observer, all the women here seem handsome, many downright beauties, or at least of that showy, spirited, and attractive style of countenance which passes for such at a first glance, though not always at a second. The grisettes of Paris are less striking than those of Bordeaux, but carry themselves more decorously; the leading expression here is galliard, even to boldness; often unpleasantly assured, but sometimes with a mixture of dignity in its assurance that helps to soften it down a little. I dare say they may be very prudent, discreet, industrious women,—household models, perhaps; but to prevent unjust surmises, they should be ticketed on the shoulders like the twelve Virtues, who (according to certain ancient chronicles) slid into the festal hall ready labelled. The style is not a good, though often a grand one: it might not, perhaps, pass muster at Paris,—few things pass in a capital that are not crutched on the modes and manners of the hour; besides, there is something national in beauty that suffers by transplantation. The Roman beauty might be thought stern and unvarying in a Paris ball-room; the Paris one

manièrée and *fade* at a Roman festa: and perhaps the grisette of the Boulevards or the Rue Vivienne,—pretty *à force de toilette*, and conscious as a court beauty, might find the splendour of the grisette Bordelaise vulgar, and her coquetry coarse. Yet it would be difficult to find a larger floating capital,—not of ideal, but material beauty, than in this chief city of the antique Guyenne.

The gay madrass seems purposely invented to aid the effect of a saucy confident figure; it is always of the richest and most vivid colours, and put on here with a degree of coquetry remarkable even in France, where, to make the most of nature's gifts, is never considered heinous. Pale green, orange, and glowing ultramarine, are the favourite colours, but the magic is in the arrangement. I write at my window in full view of one of the most distinguished of these characteristic headdresses that I have yet seen,—colours violet and pale green, tissue rich and glossy, bound round the head an inch above the dark and delicately defined eyebrows, and with one long jetty ringlet framing in the cheek of cream at each side. No bloom, but a fine marble symmetry of features

and a full tint in the lips. My sketch wants life; it is cold and still, but the original speaks like a portrait of Titian or Giorgone, and in a far different strain of eloquence from those unbreathing semblances which still exist of the immaculate lady, in whose honour green and violet* have been rendered immortal. I do not mean to pass off my chiselled beauty as a specimen of the style general here, which is essentially flesh and blood, a vigorous contrast to all that allies itself with the severity of sculpture, but merely note her down as a fine variety.

At the fall of night, La Rue de l'Intendance echoes to the pattering of feet, like Oxford-street or Piccadilly; but when I look out from my balcony in the morning, I see nothing but the gay madrass, and a few pre-occupied business men walking along the shady side of the street. Now and then a carriage passes, a heavy calèche, or perhaps a hackney coach; but oftener a sledge drawn by oxen almost as ponderous as elephants. The

* The colours of Laura's robe, when Petrarch first beheld her in the church of St. Claire, at Avignon. For a long time after his eyes saw nothing but green and violet.

fashionable quarter, in all towns the dullest in summer, and often the least original or amusing in any season, is still as death; the quays lively, though not even there does the bustle exist which I expected; and the port is now far from containing

> "Plus de barques et de vaisseaux,
> Qu'aucun autre port de la terre,"

as La Chapelle tells us it did in his time. No approach to the pressing, elbowing, urgent turmoil which characterises the London business-streets; nothing like the full tide of life that rolls through every channel of that jammed and choking city, which may well be called the world's mart.

But here the quays, thronged or otherwise, form a noble feature; we have none, which, with such a river as our magnificent Thames, is a crying sin In Paris the Seine is but a thread; but what quays! what picture! what architectural effect and harmonious combinations of form and colouring! Who ever passed over the Pont des Arts for the first, or perhaps the fiftieth time, without pausing to look admiringly,—first upwards from the line of palace and of wood which runs along the river to the hills, then downwards through the fine

vista of castellated-looking houses, varied in form, rich in colouring, emerging, retreating, dividing, narrowing, with all its story, and all its marvellous clearness, shade, and splendour, and its remarkable air of stationary calm; an effect probably produced by the long-retreating avenue of fixed objects through which the eye is led, not by a street thronged with fluctuating crowds, banishing by the rapid circulation of life all character of quiet; but by a slow river, rarely animated (at this part of its stream) even by casual movement. This effect* is even still more remarkable from the Pont Royal, where the fine scenic view of the Pont Neuf, and the retreating lines which divide and fly off from it, being farther removed from the eye, lose in distance whatever movement may belong to its nearer points, and aided by the wonderful transparency of the atmosphere, assume that peculiar air of living stillness which characterises a finely executed panoramic painting. Looked again on the river and its

* Now very much spoiled by the new bridge, which interrupts the run of the eye, and divides the river into bits most vexatiously. It is a utility, and a great one; and I am obliged to think of this whenever I look across it.

fine accompaniments, and then walked along the gallery that runs through the interior of the bridge, —I should say galleries, for there are several; by means of which water may, if necessary, be conveyed from the river to the town, and the state of the bridge examined and repaired without interrupting the circulation of carriages. Never saw any thing more exquisite than the light on the aëreal spires of St. Andrew, as we came again above ground; they looked like consolidated vapour, of a pale grey blue, and perfectly diaphanous.

Here is not the same pictorial effect as at Paris, but there is great extent,—a splendid river, shipping enough to give interest, though not (just now at least) to equal expectation, lofty and spacious buildings, good colouring, and considerable movement. Nor should the green hills be forgotten which form the opposite bank of the Gironde; and when its surface is crowded with masts, and its quays with busy people, must afford a soft and grateful repose to the eye, fatigued with the pushing, jostling, and confusion of a trade port. An unusual proportion of women on the quays, standing about, or sitting before the doors, with

their peculiar air of Montserrat or Honduras. Complexion apart, the humbler class of females here are quite creoles;—the easy shape, disengaged air, and love of glowing colours. Had Yarico, instead of sea-shells and coral-branches, worn a madrass, she would have tied it on as they do: Brunetta,* I am sure, did so. But the complexion is usually soft, pure, and brilliant, but with now and then a variety that approaches to the warm tinting of the isles. †

The most magnificent creature I ever beheld was a lady of Bordeaux; and while I write of beauty, her charming form seems to rise up before me, giving sweet help to my thoughts, and filling my mind with pure remembrances. I was very young when I saw her, and full of childish fancies about things that looked like angels; and then she

* Vide *Spectator*.

† *Note at Bordeaux on a subsequent visit.*—The gay madrass has tumbled down a foot, and it strikes me that the general air of beauty has tumbled down with it. Low caps (Charlotte Corday's) and full-blown faces, or handkerchiefs slatternly flattened, are the order of the day—perhaps of the police, as far as the head-dress is concerned; for the people in France rarely change their costume voluntarily, and each provincial town or district has one of its own.

came and gave my dreams a beautiful consistency. I have never forgotten her amazing loveliness,—amazing even in its retiring sweetness; and when other beauties have raised a moment's wonder, she has come like the evening star, effacing (yet as if unwillingly) their paler light by her pure lustre.

Our ideas of French Venuses are usually taken from Mignard's beauties, who all look as if they were rouged; or from Lely's goddesses, the brilliant ornaments of our second Charles' Frenchified court, whose large, pulpy figures, even eye-brows, and velvet eyes, seem to us all of the Montespan family. But my incomparable Bordelaise was of another order of beings, millions of miles above all toilette influence; yet not the rainbow-phantom of a love-sick poet, but a sweet and wife-like woman, innocent and majestic as Milton's Eve, with a serious earnestness of look, and a young bloom lighting up her exquisitely chiselled features. I shall never forget her, and feel myself looking about here for something that might seem as if it belonged to her beautiful blood.

Montaigne is buried here; that wise Michel Sieur de Montaigne, who makes thinkers of his

readers; that pleasant Michel de Montaigne, whose racy freshness would keep his works alive and new for ever,—if there was a for ever for the works of man. Montesquieu, too, was of this neighbourhood, and inhabited a castle a few leagues off. Such names give permanent interest to local habitation; the immortality of mind is on it, the surviving spirit still stirs within it, outliving life: the tree has been scathed, it is prostrate and withered, but we still feed upon the precious honey that is enclosed within its hollow.

The house in which Montaigne lived is said (or known) to be No. 17, Rue des Minimes; its having been so distinguished is, as we are told, unindicated by any outward work. The memory of Montesquieu is more honoured at his Château de la Brede, where the chamber in which he habitually studied is religiously preserved in the same state in which he left it. Every foot of this ground is English history, as the shades of the Talbots and the Black Prince testify. And wars more recent and more terrible,—civil, revolutionary wars, the exciters to all crimes, and developers of all virtues, have left (blood-written) in the annals of this department a

treasure of fine and touching recollections,—noble and affecting records of the fate of some of the most devoted and interesting victims of those great, bad times, when the will was gospel, and the guillotine law.

For were they not great and bad? Great in the amazing instances they afforded of public virtue and individual heroism in their purest, most glorious, and most exalted sense; bad in many ways, and in none more than in the wicked abuse of holy words to atrocious actions, perverting minds by the perversion of language, and using the sublime speech of virtue to excite the ardent, and abuse the weak into the commission of crime.

This evil still remains; so does a portion of the good,—great deeds and great views; some on record, others in action,—none forgotten.

CHAPTER VIII.

BORDEAUX, CONTINUED—THE DRAMA—THE TABLE—COQUETTES—WINES AND LADIES—BORDEAUX TO LANGON—THE GREY PARROT AND THE OLD NUN—FRENCH PEASANTRY—LANGON—THE CHAMBERMAID THERE—A LOVE STORY—THE EVENING LIGHTS—YOUNG FANCIES—THE GARONNE—FOREST SCENERY.

We have little music in the streets at night, which in this summer season surprises me; for warm climates engender indolence which music gratifies, and fosters that spirit of gallantry which makes sweet sounds its medium. But the absence of music from the streets is no proof of the absence of its sentiment,—witness Italy. Music is probably cultivated here, as it is in all wealthy and luxurious places; but whether in a feeling of its beauties or its difficulties, as a high enjoyment or a refined accomplishment, a stranger like myself has no means of ascertaining. Report speaks more decisively as to a less ethereal taste; and if it speaks truth, the

science of cookery is a study here, and a good table the chief enjoyment of the Bordelais after his day of occupation.

A taste for dramatic representations would seem to be general also, if a judgment might be formed from the size and splendour of the theatre, which is esteemed one of the finest in Europe. It is handsomely isolated, and presents a façade which *David* would have snatched at for the back-ground of one of his hard historical pictures: it has the broad steps, the columns, the ranged statues,—all that is necessary to throw his senators, centurions, lictors, plebeians, (I have them all before me on a chimney-board at this instant,) out from the canvas. The actors are reputed excellent, and probably merit their reputation; for, when tragedy is put out of the way, French acting is always perfect: it is nature faithfully and delicately portrayed, with a nicety of shading that fixes by a touch, and a complete absence of that coarseness and exaggeration which is often thought, and always falsely, to constitute the natural when it only gives emphasis to the vulgar.

I say when tragedy is out of the way, in a very English feeling; I am aware of this: for whether

right or wrong, we can never be brought over to French tragedy, or (with the exception of the immortal Talma, who broke through rules) the French mode of acting it. We allow that the tragedies of Racine, considered as dramatic poems, are eminently beautiful; but as transcripts of the nature and passions of man, and of all that is born of that nature and of those passions, they are, at least to our perceptions, cold and often speechless. So are most of the classical French tragedies; and when I think of them, I sometimes cannot help wishing the illustrious family of Agamemnon extinct.

The French are even with us. They do not love Shakspeare; but neither do they hate him as Voltaire and Frederick of Prussia did: indeed some have come over to his side, and learned to feel and acknowledge his infinite and amazing power. I once heard a young man say, "les petites demoiselles de Shakspeare;" but he knew better things afterwards, and had the good sense to confess it. However, many still believe that Monsieur Ducïs is Shakspeare; while others, (as I have already said,) have lifted up a corner of the curtain, and discovered the true Demetrius.

The theatre is closed at present, and the actors

dispersed on leave of absence. But the other luxury of Bordeaux has no furlough. All who delight in scientific and bile-provoking compounds, know that the south of France is the great larder of the capital; but Bordeaux, being itself fountain head for some things and next door neighbour to others, has the first right of selection, and uses it. In the south, the exquisite pale truffle of Provence is turned to meet account; and from thence all that gratifies the palate under the comprehensive shape of *pâté* is sent abroad into the world, led on by the sublime *pâté de foie gras*, (disputed, I believe, by Strasbourg,) and followed by the crowd of minors that come thronging on its back, as the little rivers do on the great Nile in the Tuilerie gardens.

Who has not heard of, even if they have not tasted, the unsophisticated oil of Provence, pure and colourless as water; the poulard truffé of Périgord; the unbrandified claret of Bordeaux; the liqueurs of Marseilles; the nougat* of the same

* The nougat is a sort of cake composed of filberts, pistachio nuts, the kernels of the pine cone, and Narbonne honey.

emporium; the oranges of Hyeres; the muscat of Lunel; the ortolans, quails, verdiers, bec figues,—the legions, in short, of winged things that sport in their world of air one moment, and make exquisite *brochettes* almost the next,—the olives, figs, anchovies, almonds, fruits dried and preserved, in jelly, *en compote*, in brandy and out of it,—and other countless delicacies which please and corrupt the palate in this gastronomic land. Miracles are performed (they say) under the shape of entrées and entremets in this identical city of Bordeaux, whose Medicis, though they may not live in quarried palaces like the merchant-princes of old Italy, probably know of many things of which the Cosmos never dreamt.

Did even the Romans in their costliest banquets? I have little antiquarian lore; but if the tongues of singing-birds, and the brains of peacocks, and lampreys that died a natural death in the warm hand, were amongst the prime delicacies of the table,—as well dine with frogs, or make one at a grasshopper's feast, as sup in the hall of Apollo.

We had a small fish (the *royan*) highly esteemed here, served to us to-day. It is of the sardine

family, or perhaps the sardine itself, and should be eaten perfectly fresh. Ours were so, the waiter vowed; but we detected a slight salting, which rather impaired the daintiness of the flavour; or, as I once heard a person say, when speaking of a peach steeped in Madeira, abstracted from its singleness.

If it be true that the manners of one class of society may be taken as vouchers for those of another, the ladies of Bourdeaux must be most accomplished coquettes. I never saw so much flirtability in action, as may be met with here at every corner: from the air of effrontery mixed up with it, the finer spirits are of course exempt. My beautiful Bordelaise was the incarnation of modesty, and so little a coquette, that her house (it was affirmed) did not contain a looking-glass. Whether this pattern of sweet austerity be rule or exception, the ladies of Bordeaux best know.

I never taste wine; so, as I cannot laud it gratefully, have neither hymned La Fitte, Haut Brion, or Château Margaux. Neither have I touched upon the *comet* vintage, which so many have glorified; for not being sure that wine is a

general benefit, and knowing that to myself it is any thing but a particular one, I have thought it as well to remain silent, and let others expatiate on the necessary sandiness or stoniness of the soil; discuss the education of the vine; decide whether its fruits should be crushed by hands, or by feet; or resolve the more important question of the use, or misuse, of brandy in correcting what lovers of port call the insipidity of unsophisticated claret; or making a hot inflammatory wine of it, whether it will or not.

No ladies have I seen at Bordeaux,—nothing but a huddle or two of women cronying in the street, whose silk capotes, or straw bonnets, indicated their wearers to be a few notes in the scale above the madrasses,—that is, in rank but not in beauty. Dreams of Titian, Giorgone, and Vandyke,—of Florentine, Venetian, and Genoese ladies, I leave you to be realized by others more fortunate than I have been; others who have leisure to wait for a winter ball, and if they be of the harder sex (we, it is well known, are always called the softer) courage to risk their hearts in its allowedly dangerous atmosphere.

Garden-houses, and gardens without houses, at least visible ones, decorate the suburb by which we left Bordeaux. A sea-port look about the country dwellings, and a green parrot, or other foreign bird—the well-known love-token of the sailor, hanging out in its gay cage from many a cottage casement. Whenever I see one of those gaudy strangers suspended from an humble window, I always think of the faithful heart that remembered the home love, or perhaps the fond mother, on the far-off, burning shore. But what does the poor green parrot think of, in its brass wire prison with gilt balls? Does the leafy branch, which some gentle hand has laid upon his cage to shelter him from the vertical sun, recall his forest home? or has it been quite forgotten in the grog and flip, the blustering oaths and rattling canvas of the West Indiaman, or the African trader? Who knows?—not the wisest.

I saw a parrot once at Blackwall, with a wreath of barberries in berry round his cage, and a crown of the same, woven probably by the fingers of some loving and fanciful maiden, above it. Poor thing! it was a grey parrot, and cried, Poor

Poll! at the top of its voice with such a melancholy scream; and then, Pretty Poll! with such a gibing, yet cracked and forlorn tone, that nothing could contrast more pitiably with its berries and its crown of vegetable coral than its sad-looking self; winking dolefully, and eyeing with a sort of disdain that might have had memory in it, the wire balloon suspended over the grave, grey head; and in which it was meant that the poor bird should swing as if it had been a cradling bough. But such was not its intention, for it stuck stiffly to its perch, looking, in the midst of its barberries, like an old nun on the day of a banquet in the refectory:—fresh flowers, tied up as if by loving fingers, blushing at one side; piled sweetmeats, glistening in sugar, at the other; comfits, coriander, carraway, and almond, scattered with lavish hand, and the green angelica setting off the tawny orange; novices caught in the snare, and entranced in devotion, fragrance, and lollypops,—but the old nun, who knows what it is all worth, grim and grey in the midst of it, like the poor parrot.

A light, sandy soil, excellent (they say) for vines, but tormenting enough to travellers, who

are covered with dust at every breath of air that stirs its powdery surface. By and by we shall be in the Landes, and then we shall have a bushel for every grain, and perhaps, if any one were to put us in mind of the green hedges &c., of which we made affectionate mention three days ago, we should believe them dreaming. Thus goes life: we build, pull down, assert, retract, grow wise sometimes, sometimes humble; but with every *sometimes* find ourselves a shade less buoyant than in those charming days when we took all things on trust, our own good qualities among the number. All which has nothing, or at least very little, to do with the state of the roads.

A populous and highly cultivated country to Langon; with pleasant-looking groupes of country folks passing along the fields, becoming their fine promise of grain and grapes, and each setting off the other. The squalid labourer, with his care-worn wife and ill-fed children, working a soil profitless to them, but made productive by their toil, is a melancholy sight; and when it meets the eye, one cannot help grudging the harvest of their labour to the absent or hard-hearted master. But

when those who cultivate the earth enjoy a share of its abundance, the compact between the sinews of wealth and of man becomes a mutual benefit; if the granaries of the master are full, the humbler barn of the labourer is not empty.

Generally speaking, there is a gratifying absence of palpable distress amongst the peasants of this country, and a presence of—not exactly what we should call comfort, but of cheerful content, which shows that if they do not possess the former according to our notions of it, they do according to their own. In a country decidedly agricultural as France is, the labourer seldom wants employment; and whatever may be the fraction to which land divided and subdivided may come at last, the immediate effect of the law, which makes the parent's will and divides it equally among his children, is to create a feeling (and to a certain degree a reality) of independence, favourable to character, and consequently to happiness.

The French peasant is usually a small proprietor, living on a bit of land which, however limited, is his own; a portion, perhaps, of the lot of confiscated property which, in the old revolutionary

times, his father may have bought for next to nothing. He is not rich enough to be idle, but still has a certain prop to back his industry; if he has no other patrimony, he has at least that of sobriety. The habit of intemperance is very rare in France: the husbandman's small means are not swallowed up in brutal and individual indulgence, but go to supply the wants of his family; and he must be out of luck if his wife is not a hard-working body, a plain country woman wearing the same clumsy cut of garment that her great-grandmother did before her,—gay in it too, at proper seasons, and if necessary, gorgeous; but brisk and industrious, as French women usually are in the active classes of society, and a cheerful contributor of her quota to the general stock.

A neat inn at Langon, so we have stopped to sleep. The Garonne bathing the fields and vineyards, and flowing gently under a new bridge, which has just been pronounced the finest in the world by a gipsy chambermaid; who, taking advantage of my being alone, has placed her wild black eyes opposite to me, and opened a battery of words from which it is useless to think of escaping.

In vain I write: her tongue runs faster than my pen; her eyes fasten on me with a look of loving ferocity; and the idea of being in the way no more occurs to her, than it would to a crown-princess, if it pleased her royal highness to interrupt the occupations of one of her ladies in waiting.

According to her account, Bordeaux is nothing in point of luxury to Langon; plain people come here from thence to learn politeness, fine people to practise it in a more congenial atmosphere. "Quelle luxe! (she exclaims) quelle gloire! et les belles demoiselles—les jeunes gens charmants! ah, la fière jeunesse!" and so she goes on gasconading about balls and operas, taste and gaiety; till, pausing suddenly, and rolling her extraordinary eyes as if she was going to predict some horrible fatality, she shoots off, with sundry Pythic contortions and wild looks that solicit questioning, into a disastrous story of two lovers of Langon:—so, as she will not let me write, I lay down my pen and listen.

She has certainly never read Shakspeare, nor yet Luigi da Porta, and probably knows no more of Verona than of

"Cambalu, seat of Cathaian Can;"

and yet the opening of her story had much of the old Italian novel about it; only the Capulets of Langon were more vigilant than those of Verona, and so the young wooing was speedily brought to an abrupt conclusion, the youth banished, and the maiden watched, apparently to' very little purpose. The lover went to Bayonne, and from thence (as my informer thought) to the end of the world. He was many years away; and when he returned with bettered fortunes and a faithful heart, still true to the image of her who was its early love, he found her worse than dead,—a wanderer from the paths of innocence, a lost and lonely thing, cast off by the virtuous, spurned by the severe, but more than ever beautiful. Time had used him more roughly, for he was changed out of all traces of his former self, and she who had loved no longer recognised him. The memory of sympathy was gone, and the instinct of the heart with it.

An intense desire to guard her from the further perils of her forlorn state, to be near her who had no other friend, who had made herself alone in the world, took possession of his mind. He engaged himself to her as a servant; obtained

her confidence; and she, not knowing whom she spoke to, would sometimes talk to him of the lover whose loss had driven her to despair, and then to worse wretchedness; for even in despair there is depth below depth, and in the last and deepest abyss—guilt! blacker than all beside. And here my strange narrator stops, nor can I in any way induce her to continue. "It is too terrible," she says, with a forced stage shudder, "too terrible to be told;" and really, notwithstanding the curiosity she contrives to excite, I begin to think, that what with her wild way of telling it, and her wild eyes fixing one as the interest strengthens, it may be so from her lips. But a voice of authority calls to her from below, and she leaves me to piece together the broken threads of her melancholy narrative, as my musing fancy wills, though evidently vexed to be whistled off just as she had begun to inform me that she was not a servant of the inn, but rather a chance visitor, who condescended to help, but who lived habitually in a city (name unknown—Damascus perhaps, or Bagdad) where things are on a very extended scale of magnificence.

After all, I have not the least doubt that she was herself the fair—or rather brown, inventress of the whole romance, which probably came as glibly to her lips, as the look of surprise did to her countenance when I urged her this morning to go on with her story. "What story?" she exclaimed, seeming not to understand me; then, after a moment's pause, dashed off with a mysterious air, as though she herself had been the unfortunate heroine, which perhaps, in her insane coquetry, she wished me to believe.

Strolled down after dinner to the boasted bridge, which we found unexpectedly handsome, and on our suspension plan. The sun had set, but while one half of the sky was wrapped in the gloom of twilight, the other half still glowed in the rich amber spread which it had left behind. At one side of the bridge the eye followed a long reach of the river, with the yellow light of evening concentrated upon it, flowing through banks already dark and indistinct; and then, turning to the other, rested on the dim current—there out of the influence of the western light, which bathed the base of the old church, and of the buttressed and ivied

walls that seemed to make part of it. Beyond the church, a line of houses pleasantly placed and coloured, took the air of a fishing village, and before it lay a crowd of small boats at anchor, gently swayed by the ripple of the waters.

In such a light every scene is lovely, no matter how trivial be its features. All day long the sun is high above us; at night the stars and the pure moon have a heaven of their own, to which we look up reverentially, but distantly; but at the last hour of the day, the sky seems to come down to our earth, whispering mysteries, touching it—as in fond fellowship—with its last glow; and in its sweet confidences making itself almost one with our familiar world.

While we enjoyed this placid evening picture, the passage-boat steamed up from Bordeaux, and throwing off its smoke with a whir-r, discharged its red, blue, and yellow cargo (for the women are lost in their all-effacing colours) on the strand. Were I to come this way again, I think I should prefer the river to the road: the last has no peculiar interest, but the river flowing at the base of a line of gentle hills, varied with pleasing, though

not perhaps striking objects, may have some food for the fancy in it. Besides it is the Garonne, which should go for something; and the opportunity of mixing with the people of the country for something (I think) also.

"On the pleasant banks of the Garonne, in the province of Gascony—" It is thus that a potent enchantress opens the most powerful of her stories. This simple line presents a quiet image to the mind, which, like many other quiet images, affects it sometimes more than elaborate ones. It is, perhaps, the mixture of foreign sound and home feeling that makes it poetry to the fancy, though it may be prose to the eye; be this as it may, it has helped to turn many a young head, and has sent some to the warm and teeming south, who have not found it all that the lady of the wand had made it out to be. I remember when I was under the spell, and when the sound of the south of France, or the name of *Bordeaux* on the stern of a vessel, were charmed words, bringing with them a confusion of fancies, which the reality has set in order somewhat prosaically. Yet the first impression

still remains, and the word *pleasant*, so happily chosen, always seems to me written on the landscape.

As yet I have seen nothing loftier written on it. What the Garonne may be in the Spanish valley of the Pyrenees, where it first makes acquaintance with daylight, I do not know, but shall, I hope, presently. Here it is a gentle river, broad and pure, with some tiny rock-work about it, but hardly enough to contrast the tufted foliage that sometimes hangs from its crevices, or break it into little pictures. It has no marked features; a cluster of trees, with an Italian-looking house peeping through them; a group of monumental cypress making way for itself, and standing alone amidst gayer society; a meadow, a stripe of yellow strand; a bringing together of quiet images simply—not meagrely, arranged in the uncrowded way which those great painters, who took a tree, a pool, a bank, and made immortal pictures of them, loved: but nothing to hinder another who might love nature too, though after a different fashion, from calling it all barren, especially should he chance to see it on a dull day.

There were two steamers from Bordeaux at anchor, full as bee-hives, and making the little quay look lively, but not town-like. No demand here for stockings, and not much for shoes; but the women pretty, and aware of it. Langon is famous for its *vin de Grave:* every town here is famous for something that flatters the palate. An indifferent road, dust and pavement, frequent pine woods; and, in the intervals between them, an enclosed country, golden grain, and haycocks diffusing their pleasant fragrance.

And now we are in the Landes, which (here at least) have much less character and more colouring than I expected. As we descended towards the sandy tracts, a fine forest-stretch broke upon us. To me a wide extent of forest has an inexpressible charm; I rejoice in its depth, its darkness, its solemnity, and the frequent and high-toned poetry of its lone recesses. There are so many secrets in its bosom; such volumes of thought and fancy in its silence and in its sounds,—in the odours that breathe from the leaves, the bark, the grass, and from the wild-flowers that seem to bloom for us

alone, and whose perfume, like a strain of sweet and well-remembered music, unlocks the past, and quickens its monumental effigies into life. O the past! the past! how often do we think it dead and gone, when it lies hidden in a fold of the heart, from which even the fragrance of a flower can draw it out again!

CHAPTER IX.

THE LANDES—AN AMERICAN SOLITUDE—THE COTTAGE IN THE LANDES NOT THE TRUE DESERT—ROQUEFORT—AIRE—MY DECANTER-STOPPER—PARADISE LOST AND MONT DE MARSAN—DOING ONE'S DUTY—A GHOST—SOMETHING FOR NOTHING AT AN INN—PINE FORESTS—THE LANGUAGE OF TREES—DREAMINESS—PETTICOATED CATTLE—DRESS—MAIZE AND DUST—THE PYRENEES—VICINITY TO SPAIN, ASSOCIATIONS AWAKENED AND THEIR NECROMANCY—VALLEY OF PAU—PAU AND OLD BEARN.

As we wade through the sands, I look about for the flying shepherds, but see no stilts, or (as far as we can judge) any necessity for them. Nothing that a sabot, or even a naked foot, might not plant itself in with safety; winter, however, may and probably does make such things needful.

These sandy tracts are divided at intervals by woods of oak or pine, and sometimes by delicious meadows, that look as if they had run away with their neighbours' verdure, to spread it out on their own sweet bosoms. In the midst of the sands we

find now and then, and much oftener than we expected, a cottage that realizes—not the reality probably, but our fancy-pictures of the back settlement dwelling in the forests of America: a dream which, with the red men, and the wild beasts, and the night alarms tacked to it, is not without its bad bits, but whose life of active lonesomeness, or family love-bound labour, has a fine aroma of thought, and love, and freedom in it. Felling trees, clearing unhealthy ground, hunting wild game for food, is bitter work sometimes; hard, dangerous, ungrateful toil: but the distant visionary hears only the sound of the axe in the forest, a sound than which no other yields a fuller start of thought, of remote and primeval images,—or the report of the far-off gun, another sound of man's invention,—but full of woodland scenes and wild ones, and boundless prairies, and winged legions that fill the air with life, and all the solitude and action of a primitive nature.

How often have I, who never crossed the Atlantic, gathered together the members of the patriarchal family after the labour of the fields and woods, heaped the pine logs on the bright hearth, and

drawn them all round the well-earned and cheerfully-enjoyed supper: the memory of the old home, the mother-land, crossing perhaps the mind of the aged with tender thought; the young belonging to the wilds, and happy in them. It is thus that fancy pictures the forest settlers; or it takes a solitary but loving pair, grown old in the spot which when young they had cleared to build their cabin on,—their cabin in the wilderness, where the stranger seldom comes, but when he does is welcome: such a pair as Lord Edward Fitzgerald, in the dawning day of his beautiful spirit, describes with such touching poetry of feeling sitting before the door of their forest hut at twilight; or the ancient couple, who, gliding together out of life, still thought of Scotland, and sang "Sae merrie we twa ha' been" at the evening hour, as the Abbé Morellet (I think it is) tells us.

But I have strayed away from my cottages in the Landes,—each standing on its own fresh lawn, entirely detached from any other habitation, within a grove of spreading oaks that might become merry Sherwood, or old Windsor. Close to each cottage is a circular well, with buckets suspended on its

beam,—a garden feature that cools the pulse a little, though not so effectually as a fountain or a bubbling stream. It is probably the frequent mention of the well in holy writ, that makes the sight of one recall unfailingly to my mind the sacred volume, with its desert images and infinite grandeur; the thunders of its poetry, and the serious sweetness and inimitable simplicity of its domestic narrative —poetry too, and of the most beautiful kind. There are no fragrant balsams here, nor palm, nor cedar; nor are the women's eyes in the least like the "fish-pools of Hebron;" but there is a soft colouring of shared—not desolate—solitude about this land, that has something of the sentiment of scriptural poetry in it. As for the women, a fairer never gleaned in the fields of Boaz, or came with her sheep to the "well's mouth," than one who at this moment loads her mule at the door of a cottage by the way side: Hebrew too of aspect, but the sometimes harshness of the Jewish outline fined off,—Rebecca as she sat to Walter Scott, or the Rebecca of the book of Genesis, when she gave water from her pitcher to the eldest servant of the house of Abraham. Indeed, the chance speci-

mens of the population which we have lighted on in this best bit of the Landes, (of the sandy part of it, I mean,) have been decidedly favourable ones, becoming their pleasant habitations, which, were they roofed with wooden tiles instead of red ones, would resemble in many points the charming chaumières of Switzerland. The sloping roof advances beyond the entrance, leaving the house behind it something in the Swiss way, and forming a cool and spacious shed, of which the inhabitants seem to understand all the advantages; for the women ply their distaffs, and the children gambol under its pleasant shade all the day long, playing at bo-peep with the sun, and looking enviably safe from its molestations.

Altogether the Landes are far less dreary than we expected. Wherever there are woods, and sometimes where there are none, the ground is thickly carpeted with fern,—that lover of barrenness, whose large feathery leaf yields to every breath of air, and refreshes the senses by its bright verdure and fanning movement. Long lines of pine trees sometimes streak the verge of the horizon, letting in the sky through their boles like the gleaming

of the summer sea. Even in many of the most barren tracts, an exquisite red heath brightens the parched surface; and wherever the soil seems reclaimable by care, there are dwellers on it.

But we are not in the real heart of the Landes, only on the selvage of the desert,—the embroidered corner. It is towards the sea* that the earth assumes the Arabian aspect which travellers have described, and the scene becomes wide, and drear, and desolate as the waste "towards Diblath;" or a piece of the great and terrible wilderness taken up by the spirits of the air, and laid down upon an eider-down nature that has yielded to its effacing pressure. Here is too much habitation and vegetation for a true desert scene,—indeed there is no approach to it; and though, as we drive along, the carriage sometimes rocks in the sands like a ship in a storm, and the road is floored with trunks of trees laid parallel with each other, still we feel ourselves as if cheated out of the full complement of dreariness on which we had counted, and miss the perfect originality of character which (forgetting that our route was the post—and not the desert one)

* Les Landes sauvages.

we expected to find giving additional raciness to the charming old superstitions, ceremonies, and legends, which are said to be still in customary observance and simple belief among the people of the Landes.

Roquefort,—not of cheese celebrity, is pleasantly lifted up, with a pretty stream winding in and out under rocky banks. Passed through Aire, and should have forgotten it, but for the somewhat unusually steep ascent on quitting the town: the whole contents of a seminary* were poured out upon it,—priests (or the materials for them) enough to supply missionaries for half the globe, and do home duty besides,—at least so it seemed to me; but my maid, who is a calm calculator, could only make out fifty-eight, while to my eyes they seemed grouped by hundreds; but the steep road, and a refractory horse inclined to jib, may have acted as multipliers.

Once upon a time, (and a long time ago it was,) I had contrived to possess myself of a cut-glass decanter-stopper, and I can never forget the amusement I used to find in standing on a chair at the

* A *séminaire* means in France, a college for priests only.

end of a long room, and looking through my stopper at the lights that burned on a table in the middle of it; nor the rapture with which I beheld two candles multiplied into as many hundred rainbow flames. In the present case fancy, fluttered by a little fear, was my decanter-stopper; for even when I shut my eyes, there they were—my elements of priesthood—floating in a kind of black dazzle, like the dark spots that dance before me after too much gazing at the sun.

Market-day somewhere: road thronged with cattle,—horned and otherwise; pigs numerous and squeaking; and geese—I was going to say,

"Thick as autumnal leaves,"

&c.; but it will not do to quote from that divine book among the geese, and at Mont de Marsan. Never was any thing like the human part of that immortal poem. I have been reading in it to-day, and with the deep delight which I always feel when its amaranthine words are open before me. Never was the holy dignity of wedded love, the mutual and entire confidence and sweet communion of two natures, both ignorant of evil, and kindred still in purity with the angels with whom they are per-

mitted to hold converse, so set in speech. Nothing can one think of but innocence and majesty, love and loveliness, after having wandered in "the alleys green" of that true paradise, and scented the flowing odours,

"Cassia, nard, and balm,"

of its wilderness of sweets.

But high-way or by-way ramblers cannot long dwell upon a train of thought, however congenial it may be to their hearts and fancies; their actual position is unfriendly to continuous musing, and favourable to the quick impressions of a present every moment changing: one image jostles out another with undue, though irresistible lightness; there is no graduating from paradise to Mont de Marsan.

Mont de Marsan, however, has its qualities,—a good inn tenanted by civil folks, who stripped their garden of its roses for us; a merited reputation for ortolans; a guide-book one for beautiful women—merited too, perhaps; an embowered public garden; a showy préfecture; and probably all the essentials of a *chef lieu*. We should have done more justice to the excellent breakfast provided

us, had not two waiting gentlewomen stood behind our chairs watching every movement, and anticipating every wish with such invincible assiduity, that to eat was quite out of the question. O how I envied the white-cat! what a luxury to be served by hands only! But those vigilant maidens showed that they had eyes too, for they never took them off of us. I never saw such a strong sense of duty: no possibility of upsetting it. How often did I wish them both with Spurzheim, who would have revelled in their skulls, while we might have gone on with our breakfast. Three or four times I despatched the most distressingly attentive on some idle errand; but she seemed to possess the Irish faculty of being in two places at once, for no sooner did she seem gone, than her toppling madrass was again opposite to me.

Tormenting pertinacity! and only to be equalled by the unmannerly perseverance of a ghost,—a woman spectre in a gown of rustling silk, of whom I once heard a German tell. It was in the evening, as he hung up his gun after a day's sport in the empty hall of a solitary hunting-lodge, that she suddenly stood beside him. The figure was of one

not aged, and (as he expressed it) of bad beauty; but he knew where she came from by her eyes, and fled; while she rushed after him with the noise of a whirlwind. The pigeons in a dovecote outside the house, hearing it in their roosting places, flew out, beating their startled breasts against the windows; still the man fled: a chamber door stood open; he burst in,—two who had followed him, alarmed by the uproar, did the same; they double-barred the entrance and shut out, as they thought, their ghastly pursuer; when lo! she was there in the midst of them.

"Madame, prćfere-t-elle les bougies?" is a usual inquiry at an inn not saucy enough to insist on certain refinements; but here the pretty daughter of the house, forestalling darkness and entering while it was yet day with a pair of wax lights, said, as she placed them on the table, "Mamma begs you will use these, as tallow spots her floors; but they will not be charged in the bill." Nor were they: a piece of liberality I could not in any way account for, not even with the help of the floors, which are old, worm-eaten, chinky, and of a fine ebony ground that bids defiance to casualties.

Mont de Marsan, being the capital of the Landes, attracts on market-days the inhabitants of the desert regions, who throng here on stilts, going (the inn-keeper assures us) as fast as the post. I should not have thought that the sands through which we rocked yesterday warranted such helps, but they are used there as in worse places. I regret not having seen a sheep-skin swain striding through the air, with a bright madrass striding after him,—or perhaps a country hood would be better: less like the fringed and bugled family, who attract gapers and gather sous at the corner of the Paris boulevards.

The shade of the vine is too often, for beauty at least, a mere figure of speech in France, where it is cautiously kept down to the currant-bush dimensions, to which is mainly owing the richness and vigour of the wine extracted from its fruit. Here we find it, and not unfrequently, trained over a trellis, or formed into a bower or pergola. Three or four avenues of plane trees ray out from Mont de Marsan, prefacing a thickety country occasionally ennobled by oaks in splendid singleness, and sometimes by solitary pine forests. Delightful

pine forests! where the eye meets no tangled fellowship; nothing but the light of heaven falling between the detached trunks on the reddened earth or the soft fern. There is something so solemn and monumental in the aspect of a pine tree, that when I find a few planted together in a solitary spot, it seems to me like a woodland cemetery, where the hunter whose chase is over, or the wanderer who loved to repose beneath their shade, has found a resting-place. Trees are powerful speakers: the single pine, or melancholy cypress, has the solemnity of the grave it shadows in its silent speech; it tells of the dead below, of the hand that found a mournful pleasure in planting it. The light acacia waves its beautiful boughs to let you know that it is a pleasure-garden, or a summer bower, which its bright leaves decorate. The oak is ancestral, heraldic, feodal, from head to foot, and would talk old castle legends and feats of noble hunting and moonlight revelry by the hour, if you would but stop and listen to them. The rooky elm is a rustic lover's story-book, full of twilight meetings, hand graspings, honest vows, and "if you love me as I love you" posy. The palm transports

you to the Georgian vales, in whose deep shades the royal Abbas wooed the wise and tender Abra. The pear tree brings you back to the cottage wall: the apple puts in its word with a long score of school-boy larcenies:—all speak, from the stately royalties of the forest down to the humble hawthorn—perhaps the fullest of any—of what the village boys and girls call *secrets*.

A quiet country as we go on, with a sort of fractional beauty about it; a bit here and a bit there, and bad bits too, as will happen. Sometimes a narrow footpath hides itself in a thicket, wild boughs shade it, and perhaps a wooden gate at the end opens into a green meadow, as it might do at Coverly Hall, or any other of these charming old places that cannot be named without filling the mind with images of genuine English scenery. At others, a single fir, with a stately trunk and a broad parasol-head, emulates the lonely beauty of the Italian pine, and awakens that dreaminess of mind which the landscape of Italy creates and fosters.

It is perhaps owing to this same dreaminess, that I have fancied one never sees the whole of any thing in Italy; the mind, like the eye, receives its

impressions through a shaded medium. The people are the most natural, perhaps, in Europe; and yet —I do not know why, but it seems to me that one never sees their outside edge. The French, who are far more artificial, (partly perhaps from vanity, and partly perhaps from irritability of feeling which lays them bare,) expose themselves more to critical observation than the Italians, who, it may be, are too indolent to be demonstrative, and yet so marvellously natural, letting their faults and fancies drop out any way, that it seems paradoxical to say one cannot read them through and through. It is just the same with their landscape: the sky spread over it is clear and cloudless, bright and beautiful; and yet a soft vapoury haze veils the outline.

The carts in common use here are of a classical form, and drawn by oxen with cloths hung over them like petticoats; their horns are fiercely faced with sheep-skin; and sometimes a garland of twisted leaves is hung round the neck. With the garland, the effect is that of an antique basso relievo; but without it, the poor beast looks like a stage buffalo sheeted to hide its defective proportions, as the prominent elephant in *Blue Beard* is flounced

to screen the boy in each leg. Sometimes we meet cows yoked, and accoutred in the same way; contriving, poor innocent things! to look wicked in their fringed forehead-cloths, as children do in grotesque masks. Soft hills on the right to Grenade, where the men look like morris-dancers, or Aladdin before he raves princesses, or meddles with African magicians and their lamps. White blouses open at the throat, with shirts rainbow-striped, set off with a bright scarlet sash inside them, and a small flat berret of rich crimson, blue, green, or sometimes white, carelessly placed on one side of the head. It is probably a holiday; but this style of dress, and especially the berret, becomes general.

To-day maize and dust: the first has been stealing on us for some time, and the last hinders us from seeing even the hedges. No talking now of the young green, the protracted verdure of spring, as we did on the road to Bordeaux. I recollect to have heard a person, who had travelled outside passenger through the extreme south of France in summer, say, that he had never once during the whole journey seen the horses' heads. And I can believe it; for if but a breath of air comes, we are

like sister Anne upon her tower; and as we run along, a cloud runs with us dense enough to conceal Brandabarbaren king of the three Arabias, and all his warriors, whom the renowned Don Quixote was happy enough to discover under a similar envelopement. Changed horses at a farm-house, where the boys of the hamlet, not having time to gather cherries for us, tore down the boughs laden with fruit, and thrust them into the carriage; and little children followed us, cutting indescribable capers, and flying along with flowers, or grass, or weeds tied to the end of a flexible twig, which they bobbed into our faces,—merrier by half than opera Cupids, and quite as graceful.

Suddenly a beautiful descent opens with bright glades and a soft depth of shade about it, and the mountains of the Pyrenees stand for the first time before us, veiled from head to foot. They come, like shadows, dimly and awfully, and as we sink into the valley, seem to depart from us like the dreams of the morning. Again some sweet descents, and then more *landes*, though we are no longer in the department; and farther on another look at the still shrouded, and at this moment, me-

lancholy Pyrenees: no touches of evening light linger brightly on their summits, telling their neighbourhood with heaven; but low grey clouds cap them mistily, or gravely dividing, roll off slowly, revealing their bare forms without relief of light or shadow; which, as they become visible, seem more like a pale, diaphonous outline traced upon the heavens, than the solid limitary earth; a colossal phantom that appears near—even to approach us, yet without rounding into substance.

Only these mountains between us and Spain! that "tawny Spain" which dreamers love, and which seems to the imagination,—to mine at least, such a far-off land; farther, because less familiar than others that are, in actual measurement, out of sight a-head of it. Its society is still a sealed book, its roads unfrequently travelled by leisure-hour travellers. Diplomatists traverse it, armies have run and rode over it; but a positive knowledge of the country, an intimacy with its people, its monuments, its arts, its present literature, is still wanting. Its cities are little visited; the treasures of its galleries, and still more of its convents, imperfectly known; its women still written down

from *Gil Blas* or *Don Quixote*, if not from the old passion (I will not say *love*) and murder dramas of the Castilian poets: the men, from the same types, overflowing with bower and guitar gallantry; or, like the heroes of those same dramas, full of exaggerated, though elevated sentiments of tenderness and even delicacy, with a ferocious sense of honour, and a demand in their urgent natures for powerful situations, which, not being of every-day occurrence, leaves the palpitating mind a prey to the ever-ready excitement of fanaticism in all its shapes. If we talk of a Spanish captain, ten to one but we go back in thought to the time of the Cid, or at least to the conquest of Granada; if of a Spanish Don, nothing but a valet like Gil Blas can get us up, even to the time of the fourth Philip.

As to the Doñas they will always live latticed, duenna'd, serenaded stealthily, (if they do not die of a jealous husband or a faithless lover,) in our fancies; and we have good reason to be angry with the officers who tell us (in very clever books too) that the Spanish girls (how familiar!) quadrille at balls, throw aside the divine mantilla, wear French dresses, and are as cool-headed and arithmetical

as other misses. Not that we believe a word of it—O no! The *capa y espada* stories for us: long live the old illusions, and the gallant times when every woman was an idol and a mystery!—when cavaliers fought by star-light—or without it, in the ruelles of Madrid, finding living scabbards for their true Damascus blades in the bodies of their rivals! or, like *The Physician of his own Honour*,* took the law into their proper hands, while the single shriek, or the groan that struggled with suffocation, gave awful testimony of its barbarous enforcement. But, illusions apart, what a charming writer calls the "game flavour," is still fresh in Spain. The people have not the fortune, or misfortune, to know us and others sufficiently to be spoiled by new modes and new money: they are still proof engravings, sharp, fresh, and distinct as an Albert Durer, or a Marc Antonio; their virtues and their vices indigenous, their habits and superstitions immemorial, their dress (I speak of the people) grand, graceful, and *their own*. And this character of individuality, throwing them back into past ages, gives a fine

* *El Medico de su Honra*,—one of Calderone's fearful tragedies.

antique colouring to their country and themselves. This may be also owing, in some measure, to the far-off and unfamiliar air which the Moorish mixture gives to Spanish story. To me, at least, the early period of the Moorish dominion seems almost as remote as the Babylonish captivity; and Muley Aben Hassan and Boabdil, though co-existent with the Medicis, as distant and foreign, compared with the Cosmos and Lorenzos, as Abubeker: while the court of the Moorish caliphs, and the splendour of the third Abdalraham's reign, appear almost to belong to the fabulous ages.

Thinking of all these things, I repeat to myself "only these mountains between us and Spain!" Spain! the land of old romance, from whose abundance fiction has long drawn her stores, and history that fecundity of incident and warm glow of colouring which trenches on the domain of fancy. Cordova, Seville, Granada, cities from which the sciences and knowledge brought by the Arabs out of the Egyptian and Chaldean countries were promulgated, and from whence the arts of peace, of poetry and music went abroad, refining the ferocious spirit of the times by the magic of their

melody, are behind that great wall. The land of Ruy Diez and Ponce de Leon (stirring names); of Lopez of the two thousand dramas, and Calderone of the fifteen hundred; of Velasquez, that great master of light and close follower of nature, whose works have been called the theology of painting; and of his still greater scholar, Murillo; the old Asturias of Gil Blas; the brown mountains of that high-minded and moral madman Don Quixote,—actually lie at the other side of those lofty mountains. What a medley of recollections, from the half-fabulous heroes of the *romanceros* to the Sanchos, Scipios, and Sangrados of more modern story, are conjured up by the mere thoughts of its vicinity! There they go, one pushing out the other. Valiant Cid, set spurs to Babieca and be off; make way for Bravonal de Saragossa, for the famed knight Don Bernard del Carpio, and the illustrious Count of Castille:—come, and gone. It is the noble Count de Cabra who passes, and "he of the exploits," the renowned Perez del Pulgar——But no more of this. Moorish ladies and Spanish ones, veiled beauties that glide like shrouded stars along the twilight *alameda*, knights

and squires, dukes and duchesses, duennas bearded and unbearded, Gitanos and Gitanas, crutched devils, bachelors, and Algerine captives, press on so throngingly, that all become effaced in the broad and general character of romance which essentially belongs to Spain, to its genius, history, traditions, and people. Such a country stretches out the mind, and plays with the imagination as the sun does with a flower, opening its half-closed leaves, and warming it into brightness.

But it is time to repose from this stirring drama, this rapid phantasmagoria, on the present pleasantness of the valley of Pau, and the rich côteaux of Béarn that open before us. Present pleasantness is not, however, the only claim of this ancient sovereignty; it puts in that of old and noble recollections also. United to France, not conquered by it, Béarn went along with its great Henry to join itself to the kingdom which had become his by the double right of lineage and of conquest: not yielding up the independence which wise laws emanating from wise princes had bestowed upon it, but maintained in it by the will of its brave son and sovereign; and remembering the days of

its *Cour Majour*, in which the citizens of the towns and the shepherds of the mountains had the right of voice, and to whose investigation and censure the chief of the state himself was open and amenable.

Behind this valley and those côteaux, the majestic Pyrenees stretch out proudly, brightening as we look upon them in the clear and golden light of evening, and carrying the mind along their nobly peaked and dentellated line, from the ocean to the Mediterranean. The eye does not see it all, but the imagination looks eastwards from the great central mountains of the Hautes Pyrenées, to the last bold point, where the Canigou interrupts the gradual decline of the chain; and westward till it forgets itself in the old country of Navarre, whose very sound is full of ancient story.

CHAPTER X.

PAU—MORNING SCENE—PROCESSIONS—HENRI QUATRE—A WORD OR TWO ABOUT HIM—THE SPELL OF THE SOUTH—THE MIND AND MYSTERY OF LANDSCAPE—THE CASTLE AND ITS ORIGIN—VISIT TO IT—THE VIEW—THE TURTLE-SHELL—THE NURSE'S COTTAGE—THE BIRMINGHAM QUEEN—THE BENEFIT OF BEING BANNER BEARER—ROSSINI—THE CASTLE AT EVENING—TWILIGHT MAGIC.

JULY.—Pau. This is a sweet engaging-looking place, to which my fancy warmed at once. Looked out of my window just as the sky had settled itself into broad daylight, and the market-folks were coming in with the fresh country air on them and the sweet garden bloom on their fruit, as if it had dropped gently into their baskets without the impression of a finger. Sky still grey, except in one streaky corner, and the air redolent of morning scents and humid sweetness.

This was an hour ago, and during the whole of the intervening time I have found ample amuse-

ment in the figures, passing and stationary, that have given life to my fore-ground. At this moment, two young women, linked together affectionately, arms round waists in a loving, country, Rosalind and Celia fashion, stand under my window, each with a piece of white cloth or flannel folded something in the Italian way, and laid upon the head so as to project from the forehead, and throw a shade over the upper part of the face. Two others, with baskets of fruit on their arms, and the same folded head-dress but composed of scarlet cloth edged with black, are chatting with the earnestness of gossips who meet only on market days. A cart, with oxen standing lazily, fills up a space in the back-ground; and women pass, some in the quaint capulet of black, white, or scarlet, some in the long dark mantle * covering the whole person down to the feet, while others carry water on their heads in double handled vessels of an antique and graceful form. Two mules, gaily caparisoned with Spanish saddles, led by two

* The long mantle is called capuchon; the shorter one, which forms a hood and hangs down behind, capulet: both are original and characteristic.

country girls, and followed by an old man with a long staff, floating locks, and a blue bonnet, that give him exactly the look of a Highland shepherd, complete, with the addition of a hurrying priest and some loitering children, a very lively and characteristic picture, framed in by the white buildings of a handsome square (not yet finished) which descends gently towards the country, and lets it in through two agreeable openings.

We have been but a few hours in Pau, and yet have already seen three processions. But this is Fête-Dieu time; at others, devotion is said to be only temperately demonstrative. In France (at least as far as we have seen) religious shows have neither the gorgeousness nor the muffled mystery of similar pageants in Italy. Ostrich feathers, palms, gold gauze, and ditto sunbeams, are less lavishly employed; double-gilt Madonnas in starred robes and jewelled diadems unknown; and if the archangel Michael does trample on the dragon, it is with a foot of more homely material than solid silver. No monks look on in their antique and austere garment,—made often a jolly one (for dress has its moral character) by the force of a convivial face,

or a festive recollection, its broad folds taking the waddle of a gossip's petticoat, and the crisped hair that wreaths its circlet between the tonsured crown and the laughing brow, almost swearing itself vine leaves. Neither are the church processions attended by those veiled brothers, whose eyes had better not be eyes for those who look at them, than glare as they seem to do through the holes cut in the linen cloth which covers the rest of the face. Excellent people, however; and though recalling by their gloomy disguise the spikes and pincers of the Inquisition, yet themselves of the Order of Mercy, and most meritoriously devoted to its duties.

But if there be little to create wonder here, there is nothing to shock, nothing like the wooden colossus that I once saw at Naples, towering in sacerdotal robes over the heads of the worshipping multitude; or the Madonna with the face entirely of silver, awfully surrounded by a tangle of real hair, with which I have also had the ill luck to come in contact.

Things as extraordinary, though more splendidly pantomimical, are still, it is said, got up at Aix and other towns of Provence on the day of

the Fête-Dieu, when the inventions of King René, as startling as those of barbaric paganism, are there performed in honour of the divinity. Our procession of this morning was a simple one, very white, and very maidenly; and it was pleasant to see it pass unguarded by soldiers, and unarranged by meddling priests and meddling officers, usually prominent features on such occasions. There was no attempt at splendour; but a cluster of coloured parasols and coloured dresses, exceedingly bright and gay, hemmed in the white veils, as a border of ranunculuses might do a parterre of lilies, with a rich harmonious opposition of tints, and contrived to supply its place very pleasingly.

"Le bon Henri," born in a castle that overlooks the town, and nursed in a cottage near it, is to Pau what Peter the Great is to Saerdam. Here he got the true peasant bringing up, which (to use a gossip's phrase) made a man of him, grounding him —not in the lore of schools or courts, but in those feelings of fellowship with man, and of sympathy with the demands of man's heart and the progress of his reason, not always instilled into the breasts of kings, though essential to the wise and just direction of their power.

There is something at once homely and grand in the character of this monarch, that takes hold of our affections with the strong familiar loving grasp of a child's hand: we know all about him, and love him the better for the knowledge. He did not try to persuade his people that he was an especial organization, combined of something much finer than the fine old-fashioned materials,—flesh and blood; he did not put embroidered seams and a flowing wig over his errors, but rose above them by the forty-horse power of a noble mind. The French are faithful to his memory: *le bon Henri* is a watch-word to which all hearts answer. The peasants love him, because they consider him almost as one of themselves,—a plain man, and a kind one, whose warm-hearted wish would have given to each a fowl in the marmite. The middle class love him for his justice, manliness, and bonhommie; the aristocracy, and the young of every degree, for his gallantry and chivalric spirit; mothers for the sake of the ambassador's story; ladies (they say, but it may be scandal,) for the sake of the charming Corisande d'Andoins and the beautiful Gabrielle; and all, for his good sense, good faith, and good fortune. At every fresh reign, the nation is pre-

sented with a note of hand, engaging to produce a new Henri Quatre, but it remains always promissory; and every failure is a fresh offering on the shrine of the old idol,

"Seul roi dont le peuple ait gardé la mémoire,"

as Voltaire (I believe) says in his frosty epic; or if not Voltaire, some other lucky poet, who—rare fortune! could set his panegyric to the music of his conscience. And yet even the Bon Henri has his detractors; some one said that he was a charlatan. The elements of charlatanism are tact, difficulties, and want of principle: he possessed the first eminently, and was early and constantly thrown amidst the second,—but he was honest as well as dextrous.

Only a few quiet lions at Pau,—no roaring ones; but such a view! just of the kind to make harmony in the soul, and fit it to sweet fancies. A Tempé with a mountain river winding through it, ineffable hills with woods, and lawns, and sunny dwellings on them, and verdure such as we are content to owe to our humid climate, but which springs up here in spite of Reaumur. Behind this summer scene rise up the lofty Pyrenees, spread-

ing out their broad arms as if to protect its placid sweetness; and on their sapphire front floats the soft and visionary colouring of Italy: we feel and see the south, its atmosphere of balm, its fusion of lights, and the purpling vapour, the crown-all of its landscape, the secret of its mind and mystery,—for has not landscape both? And as the fancy travels into it, does not the one feel the influence of the other? is it not led on by the sweet engagement which still, as it redeems its pledge, offers a fresh one? How often does *all* mean satiety; and to have seen *all*, known *all*, signify weariness of spirit! Long and lovingly does the fancy follow the shadow which it cannot look through; long and lovingly does it dwell on the visionary beauty with which the blushing light of a southern sky softens, without entirely obscuring, the harsher features of the earth, delighting in its sweet uncertainty as a child does to hear the humming of the wind in a sea shell. If it were a wooden fiddle with palpable strings, and a bow to scrape with, he would soon find out from whence the sound came: but the shell that has neither bow or string! Where lies the music that, when its

purple lips are pressed to the ear, comes to it so rushingly? Happily he does not know, for in the mystery lies the magic; if he did, it would be thought no better than the whistle of the wind through the key-hole.

It is the same with natural objects as with sound. Many a time have I seen the summer-evening light in Italy colour the vapour on the mountains with a rose-lilac flush, that made common spots look like enchanted ones; and wherever it rested, raised up half-seen temples, where the imagination went in and worshipped.

The view and the castle comprise (I believe) all the show things of Pau. In the evening we shall pay a visit to the antique towers, and the cradle of the bold Béarnais. An old castle, or other monument, chaptered in the history of a great man or a great period, is a wonderful setting off to a country town: an interest, and sometimes a deep one, to those who think; a kill-time to those who do not; a leaf in the sketch-book, a note in the journal, a resource to the inn-keeper, a livelihood to the beggar, and an amusement to all those who love to renew acquaintance with old recollections, and who

find pleasure in studying the moral biography of the man, or the events of the moment, in those memorials that attest, have witnessed, and outlive both. Touching this castle the tradition is, that a certain Béarnais prince, fatigued with the incursions of the Saracens of Spain, forsook his royal dwelling at Morlas, and looking about for a fitting spot to build another on, found it where the town of Pau now stands. The old possessors of the land were the people of the valley of Ossau, who exchanged it for the right of occupying the high places in the hall, which was to be appropriated in the new building to the sittings of the *Cour Majour*. Three posts (pieux) marked the spot, and where the middle one was placed rose the castle, and in due time its dependant town, called at first (as some say) Paou—the Béarnais word for *pieu*; or according to others, Pal, from the Latin word *palus*, which in process of time was transformed into Pau.

Monday.—Just returned from the château: the exterior a happy piece of colouring, and redeems the house-like character it has from some points, by its flanking turrets, domineering tower—square

and mellow,—long, slanting roof, and other bits full of character. The court, in which every stone speaks in the old Béarnais tongue, promised something which the show apartment certainly did not fulfil; it was too like the governor's rooms in one of our sea-side fortresses, to have any link with the time or subject of its story. Our guide, a buzzing, tiresome, blue-bottle of a man, flapped some heavy comment in our faces every now and then, but could tell us nothing that we cared to know: I suspect that he was the accidental, not the authorized guide, for he seemed completely abroad both on the subject of the castle itself, and its illustrious tenant. Indeed, I do not think it would have been difficult to have persuaded him that *le Béarnais* (as the leaguers called Henri Quatre) was one of Charlemagne's paladins, if not the immortal Furioso himself, whose name is a familiar one in the Pyrenees.

A long balcony, on which the saloon of the cradle opens, commands all the advantages of the splendid position which the castle rejoices in,—a position that may boldly enter the lists with any thing in any country, at least that I know of. I mean any thing

of similar or approaching character; for one cannot compare the vale of Pau to the bay of Naples, nor to the lake scenery of Switzerland or Italy, nor yet to the highly-decorated and open landscape of Richmond Hill. It recalls Berne, or rather the view from it; but the tone of colouring is more cheerful, and the long withdrawing vale that hides itself in the mountains, has still more depth and warmth than even the fine view from the cathedral platform of the latter place. In its snow mountains Berne has a feature which, as the sun sets, or the twilight darkens on it, outruns the limits of comparison; the flow of the river, too, is fuller and more even,—not, if I recollect right, interrupted by dry and stony patches or ragged ridges as the Gave* is in some seasons; but there is a prodigious flush and fulness of beauty here, the form and wooding of the côteaux leave nothing to be wished for, and the fine mixture of southern skies and southern vegetation with the young verdure of moister latitudes is perfectly delicious.

I had expected something rougher than the

* *Gave* is the generic name of all mountain rivers in the Pyrenees.

capacious turtle-shell, suspended by gold cords and entwined with white taffeta, now decorated with tri-colour flags, which passes for the cradle of the good king,—was so literally, I believe; for some honest Bourbonite hid it in the hard times of the Revolution, and bringing it to daylight when the storm was over, established its claims to legitimacy. But its modern toilette has made it so stupidly dressy for its subject, that one wishes not to believe it had ever held such a fine little fellow as, no doubt, he was; the exhibition-room, too, is so exceedingly to day-ish, that one almost fancies it open by mistake, and that Henri de Bordeaux, not Henri de Navarre, must have been its tenant. Above stairs is the chamber in which the stout-hearted Jeanne (meet mother for a brave son) sang in her hour of travail that Béarnais ballad, or rather canticle, which she had promised to her father;* and where Henri d'Albret,

* Mouste Dame deii cap deii poun,
Adyudat—me à d'aquest hore:

which, being un-Béarnized, means

Nôtre Dame du haut du pont,
Aidez moi à cette heure.

wrapping the baby in his mantle, fed it with wine, as a nursing Faun might do an infant Bacchus.

The cottage of the real nurse is a trim thing in a garden, touched up like the turtle-shell; an old farm-house near it, with brown shutters and a rusty broken-down look, seemed to us more like what it ought to be: but our guide insisted,—so we were obliged to put up with whitewash and Bengal roses. As we strolled in the Parc, a public walk of considerable beauty, we met a little girl of six years old dressed like a dancing-dog. I am so fond of children, (and the feeling I am happy to say is reciprocal, for they generally make ready friends with me,) that when I go into a public garden I am always on the look-out for them; and as my eyes wandered about, they lighted on the poor over-dressed thing, who with a premature feeling of vanity had contrived to put itself in our way. A paste comb, a rope of coral, bracelets and armlets of some tarnished gilt trash, a string of pearl beads of the true whiting's-eye quality,—"a mussel-monger would have made a better,"—and a vinaigrette, which her companions opened and shut in a transport of admiration, were all hung upon her dimi-

nutive person, which carried moreover enough of window-blind muslin and red linen to dress out a company of monkeys. Three little girls attended on their Birmingham queen, watching her movements with the most servile assiduity; while she, a very plain and vul_ar child, seemed to have a thorough consciousness of the eminence on which pinchbeck and sealing-wax coral had placed her. The companions were shabby; one a *wee* thing half in rags, but clean, and with the frock falling from the pretty shoulders in an artless way, that might have taught the deckers of the doll how lovely the simplicity of childhood is, even in its meanest attire, how folly can spoil it, and how little the merry fairies of our homes and blessings of our hearts stand in need of finery to set off the rounded form of the healthy arm, or decorate the wild ringlets, smoothed by a mother's hand into momentary sleekness.

But all this splendour was, as I afterwards learned, a pious and judicious invention for inseparably allying vanity and devotion in the poor thing's mind. She had walked in the procession, had held a string of the white satin banner, and

(according to the received mode) wore the gauds till the day was over. This child's religion was evidently gold lace, and will probably continue so; if she turns out a devotee, she will worship the glittering altar-cloth; if a sinner, the seeds were perhaps sown to-day.

As we returned by the Place Royale, we spied Rossini looking on enjoyingly, while two grisettes, violently frizzed, played at four corners with as many trinketed couriers under the shade of some trees in the public walk. He looked, I thought, oyster-like—not like Tilburino's oyster crossed in love, but like a fat complacent Colchester. I wonder what would Lavater have said to him? Would he have discovered the lofty Semiramis under the soft folds of his double chin? or the passionate Othello, in the clear blue of his large eye?—the cold blue, I was going to say; but those who are familiar with its expression declare, that it is an eye full of exquisite meaning, rich in mirth, finesse, and mockery; perfect as an organ of mellow convivial joyousness, and eminently susceptible of being made the envoy of tender and delicate feeling. There certainly are eyes that must be

talked to before one can believe what a world and all they have to say; his may be among the number, but carelessly looked at, they seem expressive of the most perfect and constitutional sang-froid.

Looked again at the glorious view: let no one cavil at the word *glorious* until they have seen the mountains unveiled as they are to-day, and then I am sure they will agree in its fitness, and allow that they have seldom seen so much warmth and loveliness in so stately a setting. The river valley looks within its mountain-frame like youth sporting at the feet of indulgent and still beautiful age; who benignantly defends its joys from harm without darkening them: there is no sudden or offensive contrast, the living and progressing richness melts almost imperceptibly into the barren and stationary majesty, as day shades off into the settled darkness of night.

The castle again; and after sunset. Even at this dim hour the interior has nothing interesting, nothing to help its recollections: large rooms, some unfloored others unceiled, cold walls, and modern windows,—but looking on such a scene! The closet or, as they call it, boudoir of Queen

Jeanne, has a western view, which, at this hour—but it must be at this hour—merits a pilgrimage. The stream of orange light—not merely colour, but live light—which the sun has left behind it, spreads over the whole western heavens, but divided by the broad beams that still ray out from its golden bed. The mountains to the south-east gather shadows; while the river, that winds slowly through its dark and gracefully tufted banks, catches a pale silvery shine, which, as it flows onwards to the west, changes to the amber of the sky. The grass on the platform of the castle seems of a tenderer green, the light leaves grow transparent and tremble in the air like feathers; while between their open line and the sunset hills, now fast shifting into cloudy purple, rise two swelling uplands, divided by a dark cleft,—one storied with trees and houses, all castle-looking at this moment, the other dropping down suddenly to the river; both thickened with wood, black now as night, and forming a dark belt between the light green immediately below the eye, and the still glowing, skyey distance; which, reddening as it fades until the golden orange becomes pale ruby, turns trees into castles, and

raises the grey convent on the detached hill, where sunshine may perhaps disclose a group of trees, or a cluster of cottages. Sweet and gracious magic! beautiful and innocent witchcraft of the twilight hour! I feel while I watch your changeful necromancy as if a fresh spring had burst out in my heart, and the gift of belief had come again with it; the charming belief in all that bright phantasma which experience calls visions, but which are truths—welcome and precious to the fancy.

I could stay for hours at this window; but the night is fast darkening, and of all the edges which made points of light, though dim ones, a few minutes since through the dark trees, only the long and perfectly even line of a large building, whose flat roof rises a little above them, is now visible; and that long, level, solid line, marked horizontally on the pale sky, has a beauty in its calm regularity for which, in the midst of so many more striking objects, one is at a loss to account, unless by the feeling of repose that it communicates to the mind, and the image of simplicity which its pure and unvarying form presents.

It was all dark when we passed through the castle chambers, but not startling: nothing aids the fancy, nothing quickens thought; except perhaps the staircase, or rather, the low, coved roof of stone, elaborately carved, which runs along with it, seeming to me (I know not why) as if it was carrying the eye into something subterraneous, and which became effective as night gathered on it: so did the statue of Henri in the poor nook at the bottom. I knew a person who could not bear to sit in the room with a portrait, because the eyes (she said) would follow her; but a statue in the darkness-visible hour, is next neighbour to a ghost.

CHAPTER XI.

ROAD TO LES EAUX BONNES, AND LES EAUX CHAUDES—PASTORALS—SPANISH CHILDREN—LIVE STOCK AND ROSES—THE MOUNTAINS—ARUDY, AND THE VALLEY OF OSSAU—WOMEN OF OSSAU—LES EAUX BONNES—THE OLD TREE—WONDERS IN THE SKY—LES EAUX CHAUDES—PAU—THE VISCOMTE D'ORTHE—HENRY IV.—ROYAL LOVE-LETTERS—BERNADOTTE—ROYAL WISDOM—A FAIRY TALE.

FIVE posts from Pau, in the heart of a mountain hollow, are Les Eaux Bonnes. The springs, which are used both internally and as baths, have a high reputation, especially in pulmonary complaints; a the neighbouring ones, Les Eaux Chaudes, have for paralysis, rheumatism, &c.

Sweet scenes lead from Pau to these springs; first through the valley of Gand,—itself all pleasantness and often beauty, and onward through scenes whose pastoral sweetness grows as we advance into something like romance,—the sylvan, gentle, ballad romance of the hill-and-valley countries that lie at

the foot of the great mountains ; serving as thresholds to their high chambers, but thresholds sown with innumerable sweets. There the hidden brook becomes an open stream, brawling over the low steps into which its granite bed seems artificially hewn ; or flowing on in its pale-green purity by the road-side, with angry chidings or sweet murmuring. This river gorge is beautiful ; a narrow valley of broad shade and delightful murmur, a road and a river—and no more, between two ranges of lofty hills, growing gradually into mountains, and feathered upwards with the fine branching foliage of the oak ; and between their single trunks all the pretty accidents of surface, colouring, bush, fern, and smooth turf made to lay shadows on, coming in deliciously. Now and then the hills step back a little, and then the humid meadows that find room on the river's brink, show off such beautiful airs of freshness, that one laughs in the heart to see them.

The world has done with Thyrsis and Amaryllis, with iron-hearted nymphs and love-sick swains, dialoguing their mistresses' charms and wagering the first yearling of the flock, the poesied ring, or

pipe of amber, to sustain the pre-eminence of a sloe-eyed Phyllis, or a sky-blue Daphne; and no longer takes interest in the parental counsel or just decisions of the old shepherd Palemon, or Evander, though he may adjudge the ivy-bound bowl, or cunningly carved crook, with the equity of a master in chancery.

If I were to stick them on my hills, like the nine muses on a drop-scene, or scatter my vales all over with their piping, listening, loving, scorning figures, my hills would look like pasteboard, and my valleys no better than play-house decorations. Nymphs and swains your occupation 's o'er!—blank as Othello's: but console yourselves, soft worshippers of Pan; there are records of your innocent loves and lives that will last for ever,—Virgil has vowed it, and so have others. But in this analytical, utilizing, positive age, your shrines are deserted, and the memory of your worship laid upon the shelf like a cracked china doll, or a piece of tarnished tissue. A file of Spanish children (perfect Murillos) at this moment crossing a rough wooden-bridge, with sacks on their backs like begging friars, and hurrying (on the friars' mission) to

come up with us; a team of oxen drawing a light cart, and toiling along as if it was a heavy one, knocking their knees together, and their heads against each other; an old Béarnais with floating locks, letting them go their own way; and a grandam at a cottage-door—a pastoral Hecate, taking care of an imp who has frightened a hen almost into convulsions, may perhaps do as well—must indeed; for, except two cows who are standing still in the middle of a brook, and a huddle of pigs growing giddy under the guidance of an eight years old swineherd, I see no other live stock.

Roses have luckily not gone out of fashion with pastorals; they are still sweet at all times, and good for many uses; and among others, for brightening up blackberry hedges as they do here, garden hedges, with bushes for birds to warble in and posies for the shrine of the Virgin, within their sweet enclosures. Upon the hill above the hamlet of Rabenac, is one of those old-fashioned mansions which embellish the côteaux of Béarn; and before it, one of those bright lawns that emulate the softness and beauty of true English sward; and about it wood; and beneath, our old gossip the river, gab-

bling to the trees that wash their roots in its waters. I shall say no more of the green ascents, for I am persuaded the fairies have something to do with their magical freshness; and that without knowing the secrets of faërie-land, there would be no giving the true elf-green and May-morning glisten to July meadows. Some who know nothing about these same fairies, talk of rain which has fallen here lately, and point out the moist leaves of the oaks that make hedge-rows or groupes, or back into the woody depths, as proofs; but in such cases, proof is nothing to fancy.

Splendid catches of light on the mountains. Honour to the mountains! they have been more or less with us all the day,—gauzily veiled, but not hidden. Regions of thought, and lifters up of all that is not dross within us,—blessings on ye! Forests, seas, mountains, are the everlasting tables on which God has graven his attributes of beauty, power, and glory. We know it, not because our eyes admire it, but by the instant and instinctive homage of the heart.

A fine pause at Sévignac, and a look down over a rich fore-ground of oaks upon a valley of Italian

colouring, with its dark-roofed, village-looking town, (Arudy,) and mellow castle, and winding river, and the soft plains,—green, warm, and wooded, set in with the wonderfully tinted hills, which never fail here. It is a scene calculated to awaken delight and then compose it to meditation. Beyond these plains are others, dotted round their outermost edges with dark villages, each with its baby cupola, or small slated steeple. Here the Gave, dividing into many branches, makes weedy or tufted islets, or pebbly patches, just as the wild rivers do in the lonely, and often ragged valleys of Italy; and the valley of Ossau dives off into the mountains, tracing between them the dark line that leads to Eaux Bonnes and Eaux Chaudes.

And now we are in midst of the living beauties of Ossau; who well deserve their reputation, fine creatures as they are, in their large white chemises drawn in round the bottom of the throat, and forming, with the exception of a short black petticoat of coarse woollen cloth, their only garment. A black capulet, or a white edged with black, hoods the face slightly round, and is thrown back behind the shoulders; bare feet, and generally, though not

always, ankle stockings with a fringe at the end of them; which, with the addition of a row of gold or gilt beads encircling the neck, or a slight black string with a silver heart and cross pendent from it, complete the simple dress in which the girls of Ossau, whose fine statue-like shapes set off their undecked garb, surprise the passing stranger,—and not only by their general air of beauty, but by the nobleness of their deportment, their young queen's dignity, and sometimes by the elevated cast and perfect regularity of their features. The straight fall of the capulet gives a sphinx-like air to the head, which is often strengthened by the form of the throat and bust: they look like women of Thebes or Memphis, or what we fancy they may have been; and so grand, that when they return our gaze with a hearty laugh, as sometimes happens, it seems a condescension more of accord with their innocence than with their majesty. It happens to be the hour when all, except a few who remain in the fields tossing the hay and spreading it, are returning from their day's labour. Among a number who might pass for beauties, is one absolutely undeniable; such a delightful little face—

small, pure, radiant; eyes deliciously opened; a fair virgin front; an Isis figure, tall, grand, and firm: but the gay laugh and simple mirth of the rest, and no idea that we are admiring her! What the young women of Ossau may appear to those who pass this way to-morrow, I cannot say; but we all received the same impression.

After the little town of Laruns, the road divides and forks off,—the right prong to the Eaux Chaudes, the left to the Eaux Bonnes. Both are strikingly placed, each in its mountain gorge; both melancholy, but the last approached more smilingly, though when attained, buried in the hollow of the lofty barriers which surround it, shutting out all apparent issue. A rough path,* inaccessible to wheels—perhaps to horses, but I think not, communicates with the valley of Azun; but to those who cannot undertake the mountain work, the village of Eaux Bonnes is the *ultima thule*. But it is not without its watering-place elements,—a spacious hotel, a table d'hôte, public room, evening meetings, music, cards, occasional

* Now (I am told) improved into what, in the language of mountains, is called a road.

balls, and picturesque rides—charming ones, we are told, though the immediate spot is blocked up and melancholy.

Eaux Bonnes consists of fourteen or fifteen houses, but large ones; it makes, as I have just now said, attempts at gaiety,—perhaps successful ones; and yet the malady for which its springs are pronounced most efficacious, is perhaps, of all those which undermine the principle of life, the most profoundly melancholy,—its flattery is so sad, so hollow. The young smile, talk of the future, glow with bright colours while they do so, lose nothing of the warmth of affection in the egotism of illness, live amongst us to the last,—caring for the world, clinging to its interests, and wringing the hearts of those who watch them, knowing how soon the earth, which they still linger on so lovingly and hopingly, will cover their poor remains.

There is a show point of view here from a hill—I have forgotten the name, close to the village: to-day it was set in with clouds, and sullen. The torrent of the Valentin makes a beautiful cascade in the romantic glen below, to which we descended by a rough path, quite slippery from the rain that drizzled softly on us; so down came my chairmen at

the foot of such a venerable tree, that I heartily forgave them for the shock. I might have perhaps passed its knotted roots unobserved, but for the stumble which brought me into close contact with the convoluted fibres, that struck their grapples sturdily into the earth, and enwreathed each other in fine serpent-like folds. Such a tree may have suggested to the sculptor the idea of the Laocoon, as the Chinese found an alphabet in the fibres of plants, and Christians an architecture in the green aisles of the forest.* How often do the accidents of nature originate thoughts which, but for their aid, might have slept for ever. O the landscapes that I have seen after sunset in the skies—the bright and lonely ones!—heaven-touched, and leaving in the mind such images as even the beautiful earth could not have offered to it. And once I saw an ascension, the figure mounting upwards; and at each side an old man in long garments, kneeling as if on the point of a rock that seemed joined to the earth,—the one with both arms extended, the other with the whole body stretching after the ascending figure; the world below with the gloom of twi-

* So we loved to fancy; but now we are told another story.

light gathering over it—the red evening sky making the back-ground, with the real light of heaven on it. This seems like a dream, but my eyes saw it, and so did other eyes; and the clouds to whose fantastic groupings this singular personification was owing, remained stationary long enough to have enabled me, had I been a painter, to have sketched the whole; and then (supposing that I had been a great one) I should have made a picture, before which the wavering heart would have knelt down worshipping.

Eaux Bonnes boasts an excellent inn, spacious and, like the country, very Swiss,—gallery over gallery, and the bed-rooms opening on them; cows milking in the court below, with a *rantz des vaches* in every jingle of their sweet bells; and a long saloon three windows at a side, a regular cross-light public room fitted-up for evening socialities, (this, by the by, not a Swiss feature,) with card tables, piano, etc. *Fameuse cuisine* (they say) and civil people.—N. B. Breakfast served without a table-cloth. Never saw this before in France, though I have heard of it; this sin of omission excepted, all else was excellent.

Returning from Eaux Bonnes, we found ourselves at the point from which the road to Eaux Chaudes dives into the mountains. The village is approached through a sombre and majestic defile, rocky lines boldly ledged, and a pale green torrent tearing through it. A few dull-looking houses, coldly placed, constitute the village; some wan faces look out from the windows; a small rain falls without noise; every thing seems sad. The bluster of a storm has life in it; but this silent, constant, melancholy dew, seems made to moisten grave sods: all look sick down to the children, and none look cheerful, except two middle aged gentlewomen, (house-letters by their look,) who stand in their balcony simpering as the sound of wheels approaches, and anticipating the chance of new arrivals. But there is a gorge beyond the village in a high tone of romance,—lone, and wild, and powerful, which I know I should love better than any thing at Eaux Bonnes: we got on as far as we could in it; but the rain thickened and the clouds rolled down on the hills, so that we were glad to hasten back to the inn, where we sat drying our shawls, and looking through the mist till we were

heartily sick of Eaux Chaudes, whose fair-weather face we had not an opportunity of admiring.

The rambling English seem to love Pau, and some have chosen it for their residence. It has many good houses in airy and agreeable—sometimes splendid positions, a few handsome hotels, reasonable markets abundantly supplied, delicious walks and rides, a charming climate, romance in the mountains, and real life in the mountain baths; with a reputation for winter gaiety, and social intercourse on pleasant terms. The campagnes that are scattered about on the hills have a charming look about them, and tempt one to inquire if the one in the wood, or the one on the lawn, is to be let: what a nearer inspection may reveal, I know not,—scrubby secrets, perhaps, or tasteless ones; but the distant look is most inviting.

The view, however, is the court-card here: if I lived at Pau and out of sight of it, I think I should never willingly pass a day without visiting some spot from whence I could dwell on its arcadian beauty. Pau, which has the honour to be the capital of the Basses Pyrenées, may be called the vestibule of its mountains, as Berne is of the

Oberlands,—but with this difference; that a drive of a few hours takes you into the heart of the former, while you must often wait the pleasure of the water-sprites of the lake of Thoun, (gruffy gentry sometimes,) till you get sorely out of patience with lake navigation.

There is a spacious establishment here for improving the race of horses: those from Navarre are particularly esteemed. In affections of the lungs, they are sent like other invalids to the mineral springs, with which the Pyrenees abound; and where they get cured, (as a man just now told us,) "tout comme nous autres." In lieu of antiquities and the arts, Pau boasts of having given birth to two kings,—Henri the past, and Bernadotte the present:* it boasts too of a noble-minded son, who was no king, the brave Viscomte d'Orthe, who being governor of Bayonne at the time of the Saint Bartholomew, and receiving an order from Charles IX. for the immediate massacre of all the Huguenots within his reach, returned the following laconic answer;—"Sire, j'ai communiqué la lettre

* Pau has also given birth to the celebrated mathematician, Renau.

de votre majesté à la garnison, et aux habitants de cette ville. Je n'ai trouvé que de braves soldats, de bons citoyens, et pas un bourreau."

"Débourbonnez nous," prayed the zealots, when Henri came to the throne; and Providence not helping them, they helped themselves, and were all the worse for it at the long run. The frank, ready, piquant wit of the *bon Béarnais*, his naïf and happy sallies, help his memory as much as they helped his cause. He probably did not pique himself on writing billets; but here are two that will stand tests; one, the well known missive to the brave Crillon after the battle of Arques:— "Pends toi, brave Crillon! nous avons combattu à Arques, et tu n'y étais pas. Adieu, brave Crillon! je vous aime à tort et à travers." How like a fresh wind blowing in the face, and cheering the very heart this is!

And this to Gabrielle: "Mes belles amours, deux heures après l'arrivée de ce porteur, vous verez ce cavalier qui vous aime fort, qu'on appelle le roi de France et de Navarre, titres certainement honorables, mais bien pénibles; celui de votre amant et bien plus délicieux. Tous trois en-

semble sont bons, à quelque source qu'on les puisse mettre, et je ne suis pas d'avis de les céder à personne. Je suis fort aise que vous aimiez bien ma sœur; c'est un de plus assurés témoinages que vous puissiez me rendre de votre bonne grâce, que je chéris plus que ma vie encore que je l'aime bien. Bon jour, mon tout!" And another, "Si j'eusse péri dans le combat, ma dernière pensée eût été pour Dieu, l'avant dernière pour vous."*

Napoleon's early letters to Josephine have much of this naïve and heartfelt tenderness; they have always seemed to me simply and touchingly demonstrative of an affectionate nature,—even of a household heart; the last quality probably for which posterity will give him credit.

Of Bernadotte, all speak with respect: nothing (it is said) can be better, kinder, or more judicious than his conduct towards his relations here. He does not invite them to Stockholm, or countenance their uninvited approaches; he does not push his subjects out of old posts to make room for them; and has not yet thought of turning a préfecture

* Some of his letters to her are dated, "De nos délicieux deserts de Fontainbleau."

into a principality for their aggrandizement. But he occupies himself about their welfare, even to that of his distant and obscure *petits cousins*, aiding, encouraging, taking a personal and minute interest in their education, from the conviction that (as he himself expresses it) in the present age the only powerful protection is personal merit; and all this with such activity of heart and utter absence of ostentation, and above all so much good sense,—the moral faculty the soonest overset by sudden elevation, that one cannot hear of it without a feeling of respect.*

* I extract the following note, illustrative of his private character, from the manuscript *Monocauseries* of a charming woman, (herself in a distinguished position at Pau,) who has most kindly allowed me a peep into her interesting records: "Saint Simonien de fait, il distribue ses nombreux bienfaits sur sa nombreuse famille, aux dépens seuls de ses propres économies; et selon la capacité intellectuelle, selon la position sociale et morale de chacun. Celui-ci est digne Conseiller à la Cour Royale, celui-là conduit encore sa charrue; l'un est Baron, de par un Majorat, l'autre petit rentier bourgeois, tout plébéian demeurera; mais, il n'en est point dont l'existence pécuniaire ne soit pas, et convenablement, assurée. Pour chacun de leurs enfants, toute voie de noble et sage ambition est ouverte par une bonne éducation."

The maternal ancestors of Bernadotte have, in common with other families of the mountains of Cauteretz, a domestic fairy; and the Abadies of Adast, from whom his grandmother descended, have a very sweet and lovely one, of whom the following graceful and authentic tradition existed in the archives of the hamlet of Adast long before the birth of Bernadotte; who, retaining a confused recollection of the prophecy which had amused his baby days, thought of, and wrote about it from his Scandinavian throne with something of the superstition of a mountaineer. I am indebted to the source already gratefully alluded to* for this genuine legend, which I have translated literally.

PREDICTION OF THE FAIRY ABACIA,

Fairy of the Family of the Abadies of Adast.

In the days when the fairy Urganda (one day old, another young) had her favourites among certain knights-errant whom she especially protected; when the fairy Monto, foundress of the city of Mantua, changed herself into an adder once a

* See the foregoing note.

week, and Melusina, from the highest tower of the ancient castle of the Lusignans, announced with mournful and piercing shrieks their destruction and the ruin of the royal house; beneath a hillock to the south of Adast, in the valley of Lavedan, the fairy Abacia remained enchanted in a fountain, which is now no longer one, being at this day dry.

Tradition has not told us whether she was of the first, the second, or the third order of fairies; but Destiny, more powerful than them all, had carefully assigned to each the part she had to perform on earth, and it was written in her immutable decrees, that the fairy Abacia could only be disenchanted by a man not married, who was fasting, and yet had eaten. How many years elapsed before any one thus qualified appeared to release the imprisoned fairy, tradition has also forgotten to inform us.

However, it so happened that, towards reaping time, the young heir of the house of Abadie of Adast went abroad into his harvest fields, having for his companion the heir of Vignaux and Natalaa; and going in to the one where the fountain was with the fairy Abacia hidden under its waters, took an

ear of corn, and breaking a grain between his teeth, cast it away without swallowing it.

At the same instant a young and beautiful woman stood before him; who, fixing on him the look which especially belongs to fairies, said in the sweetest of voices, "You have disenchanted me, and ought now to take me as your wife. Do you consent?" The young man, enamoured of her beauty, readily agreed. "My fate (she added) still depends on another engagement. Promise that you will never call me 'lady,' or 'lady of the water.'" He promised.

Two children, beautiful as angels, were the fruits of this union; every thing prospered in their happy home; but at an epoch, of whose date there exists no trace, it happened that the husband went up to see his hay cut on the summit of the mountain neighbouring to Cauteretz. As he returned in the evening with his servants, he saw with astonishment and anger, that the unripe grain of his fields had been cut down and piled in shocks; and his wrath redoubled when on arriving at his house he learned that it had been done by his wife's command. He refused to listen to the gentle explanations which

she would have given him; and at once to humiliate and punish her, cried out, "Lady—lady of the water!" The fairy instantly disappeared.

Then did he weep, groan, and utter bitter cries; but he was destined never to behold her more. Sometimes, when he was absent, she would come and embrace her children, combing their hair, and always with a golden comb.

One evening when she was alone with them, she said, and her tears fell as she spoke, "It is owing to your father's perjury that I have not done for you all that my power as a fairy might have enabled me to undertake, and now my destiny calls me into another region; but from thence I shall watch over you. Love virtue, walk in the paths of honour, and learn what I am permitted to disclose of the secrets of futurity. Know, that one of your descendants shall have much renown, and that a warlike and illustrious nation of the north will call him to reign over their nation."

Having thus spoken, the fairy Abacia disappeared—and for ever!

CHAPTER XII.

THE VALLEYS OF PAU—EARLY PRINCES OF BEARN—THE PEASANTS—THEIR CHARACTER AND HABITS—ALL THAT CAN BE DONE WITH A PIG—A COUNTRY WEDDING—NAY AND ITS MARKET — CHATEAU D'ANGOSSE—AN HOUR THERE ON THE GRASS—NEIGHBOURHOOD OF PAU REVISITED—EVENING AND AUTUMN—THE ORFRAIE—OLD CUSTOMS AND SUPERSTITIONS—THE FOREIGN TOMB—APRON-POCKET NOTES.

THE valleys in the immediate neighbourhood of Pau (after passing the river) are of exceeding sweetness and beauty. There are soft, open, pastoral valleys, and close wooded ones watered by cold clear streams, that filter through beds of granite, or flow on swiftly or loiteringly through charming meadows, and along wood-sides, that seemed made for their sweet companionship. Sometimes the road hangs on the brow of a hill, and catches over the fresh ridges that enclose the low grounds the alpine chain, glowing at the fall of day like lapis lazuli; at others, runs along with

the wild stream through leafy solitudes or bright lawns, every one a pastoral. Of these meadows some are just mown, soft and even as our garden grass-walks, and such a green! not metallic, not verdigris, but steeped through and through till the depth becomes dazzling; others all flowery and scented, waiting for the scythe; and all enclosed within hedge-rows chiefly of oak, (here superb,) or wooded banks that form an irregular border encroaching gently on the meadows, or retreating from them into sylvan depths. Through every opening, from every height, the mountains, shadowy or pronounced, are visible; unless it be when the clouds drop low, and then the rich and lovely côteaux have it all to themselves, and make another kind of country of it; peaks and eagles vanish, and vines, ploughshares, woods, and woodlarks,—the thrush, the linnet, and the hawthorn bush, come into play.

I have never seen a country more beautifully ridged: one wooded line runs parallel with another, not stiffly, but in soft and graceful undulations; a third and higher one stretches off beyond; valley after valley lies behind them, full of silence, shade,

and freshness, and as there are literally no bad bits here, every country-house has at least a fine position, usually a pleasant country character, and often woods and lawns that we love to liken to our own of England.

The early viscounts of Béarn, Centulles, and Gastons were brave men, who made war against the Moors of Spain, or the Saracens of the Holy Land; and swore, with a hand on the missal and the cross, to preserve the rights of their subjects sacred from all infraction. That they were independent sovereigns is proved, by their having had a mint at Morlas, where they coined gold; a privilege never allowed by the kings of France to their vassals. In the feodal times, when the great vassals of the crown of France paid homage for, or disputed thrones with, the monarch, Béarn preserved, under the sage and paternal government of her princes, her laws and independence; and of that independence her sons are to this day honourably proud.

Amongst those princes, local history has distinguished Gaston the Fourth, who fought bravely in the Holy Land, side by side with the far-famed

Tancred; and who, according to the chroniclers of the times, was one of those who at the siege of Jerusalem passed the bridge with Godefroi de Bouillon, the Duke of Normandy, the Count of Flanders, and two or three others of heroic name; and having faithfully fulfilled the duties of a Christian knight, bathed (as was the custom with those who, having staid their time, prepared to bend their steps homewards) in the river Jordan, gathered palm branches in Jericho in the garden of Abrasias, and then returned to Béarn, and gave thanks to God in the church of Lescars for his great mercies.

Every thing in the Pyrenees has a character of its own. We seem to leave France behind us as we enter them, and the eye is immediately struck by the sudden and singular change. The dress of the women, their capulets and capuchons; the physiognomy of the young men with their Henri Quatre air, *fin et gaillard*; the shepherd look, pastoral and patriarchal, of the old ones; the southern nonchalance, Spanish-sounding language, and warm vegetation, all combine to produce an unexpected effect, which is increased by the tribes

of Spaniards of all classes, whom political casualty or the desire of gain have thrown in upon the country. The labourers who come over from Arragon, being harder workers than the native peasants, and content with lower wages, are sure to find employment; their wives and children beg, and contribute not a little to give a foreign and especial character to the country.

The shepherds of Béarn have the dark eyes and the aquiline nose, as in the time of Montaigne, but I am not sure of the "odeur de forte conscience." The old Béarnais with his small flat berrêt, blouse of blue or white, his hair cut close on the crown, but flowing over the shoulders like the kings of the Merovingian race, has something frank yet staid in his aspect, which becomes the simple and pastoral character of the country,—I speak especially of the old men, the young ones being free gaillards, who have not yet come to their dignity. Old age in peasant men is usually dignified, but rarely so in peasant women, who are oftenest bleared and full of care; while the men contrive to set off their silver hairs with a healthy and pleasant, though magisterial, serenity of coun-

tenance. I have seen a few respectable Roman-nosed matrons here, stern as northern prophetesses, but erect and active in their long black robes and scarlet capulets; but these lofty specimens are scarce, while the hearty old grandads seem all of the same upright, ruddy, patriarchal race. The young men are often handsome, with a marked expression of shrewdness and simplicity; two qualities apparently opposite, but frequently united: the young women in general comely, superb in the valley d'Ossau, pretty and coquette at Pau, expert (the damsels of Pau, I mean,) in the tie of a madrass as the grisettes of Bordeaux; and, if the scandalous chronicle says true, not at all disposed to follow the example of that fair girl of Monasque, who seeing that her beauty had made an impression on the susceptible heart of Francis the First, scalded or scorched her face till she had destroyed every thing that could have excited his dangerous admiration.

In summer, the light vest, or the blouse, (the long-sleeved tunic of the ancient monument,) is the habitual dress of the Béarnais peasant. In cold weather, the *cape* with its friar's hood keeps out the

biting air. It is probably the same "cape Bergerique" which "Sainct Martin acheta pour son usage" hundreds of years ago. In remote places the people are like well-preserved coins, that hand down to us the fashions of past ages.

The Béarnais peasant is cordial, shrewd, civil, and hospitable; *fin et courtois*, say those who do not love him; but those who do, tell charming stories of his kindly welcomings and disdain of remuneration, his courteous, joyous, careless spirit. Mildness and urbanity seem especially to belong to his character; but the rougher Bigorrais, who piques himself on his frankness, calls him more silken than sincere. The Béarnais peasant is story-loving, fond of long gossipings at the cabin fire by the resinous blaze of the pine branch, fond of the *broïlle*,* of the *garbure*,† with or without the salted leg of a fat goose, or the slice of bacon in it; fond too of the bon vin de Jurançon, *non baptisé*, but sober withal, and generally (it is said) a spare liver. His days seem to pass without care, as

* A paste of maize.

† Sort of vegetable, or rather cabbage, soup, thickened with potatoes boiled to a paste, and seasoned with hog's lard or bacon.

without the power of luxurious indulgence, and much as the shepherds did in Virgil's time, or at least in his Eclogues. Of the sweet apple, mellow chestnut, and country cheese, there is no lack, but the pig is the article of luxury; every peasant contrives to have one, from which he extracts as much lard (*graisse*) as possible, which, if he can afford it, he reserves to season his garbure; the brief luxury of the unkeepable pudding is enjoyed at home, the rest often traded on, at least by the poorer cottager, who contents himself with the flesh-pot savour communicated by the coarse unctuousness of the lard to the simple ground-work of the unvarying soup. When the death is over, comes a bustle that has something the air of a festival; *saucisses* and *saucissons* are multiplied, till the wonder is how one pig could have furnished even the tithe of such profusion; pots of lard are ranged in graceful uniformity under their rich festoons; and all this without any detriment to the regular *jambons*, *côtes*, or *petits salés*, which constitute the winter stock. But the chapter of pigs might be spun out here into a volume: in the Basses Pyrenées a considerable traffic is carried on

in the pig way, and a large portion of the hams, distinguished by the European title of Jambons de Bayonne, are brought to perfection in the cabins of Béarn.

A wedding here is sometimes two or three days of merriment to the neighbours of the bride-folks, who keep a sort of open house during that time, eating all day, dancing all night, and flinging away their hard earnings as if they had not worked for them. To the dinner each guest brings an offering,—one a turkey, another a duck, a third a joint of meat, to which the bride-folks add bread, wine, lights, music, and the galette;* the wedded pair parade the village with a fiddler scraping before them, and their friends following two by two,—the bride usually doing the dismal, and the bride-groom too sometimes. The former decorates her hair—that is if she dares—with the blue flower of the periwinkle; but as it is here considered as the symbol of purity, there are some who, in the bustle of the morning toilette, remember to forget it.

I wish I could tell of the beautiful wedding which a lady of this country described to me with

* A cake.

such graphic touches, that I feel ashamed of not remembering the curious ceremonial. I recollect, however, that the bride was demanded by *ambassadeurs*, as the bridegroom's messengers were styled, and did not appear at the first bidding; but descended at last like Sara, the daughter of Raguel, from the upper chamber. Grain, eggs, and I think apples, were carried before her in the nuptial procession, probably as emblematic of fruitfulness and plenty; and there was something about the mystical number nine, the bearing of which I have now forgotten. Various ceremonies peculiar to the country preceded the sacred ritual; but they have melted into the general picture, which comes to me like a Paul Veronese, with the crimson satin damask stomachers and capulets lined with the same, the gold and silver trimmings and rich stand-on-end petticoats of the bride and her sister, (wealthy peasants of the valley of Ossau,) set off by the grave garments of the matrons, as the gorgeous robes of the great painter are by the dark curtain, or sober velvet of the table covering.

There is a very vivid country gathering every Monday in the market-place of Pau. The prin-

cipal street is a glow of colouring, of which fruit, vegetables, flowers, and capulets form the shades; but the smart cook-maids, with small feet and rakish-looking madrasses, give it too town-like an air. A market in the Pyrenees is the same thing to the country folks, as an Irish assize or an English race-meeting to the provincial belles and beaux: all go to it; some for business, others for pleasure, all in their best gear and best faces. Sometimes the weekly market brings such a throng, that a stranger passing through might guess it to be at least a quarterly fair, if not a yearly one. The little town of Nay, (a pleasant drive from Pau,) with pointed roofs, low slated spires, and arcades full of bustling country life, still as in the time of Marca, *gentille, agréable, et marchande*, cheated us in this way: we thought that we had stumbled on something rare, and found that what we fancied a festival, was merely the usual weekly market. And a very pretty scene it was, all the country folks in their glory, the long street full from end to end, wicker baskets of a neat form and workmanship ranged in rows at each side, and abundantly stored with vegetables; cheese, geese,

homespun cloth, and cotton shawls filled up the intervals; and behind each lot of merchandise sat a grave capulet, or a gayer madrass; or perhaps a stern matron with a dewlap cap, whose loose white chin-border, wagging as she spoke, would have made a grey-beard of the youngest. Unusual smartness visible amongst the capulets, some running into black taffeta quilled down the seams with black net or ribbon, downright domino hoods, which made masqueraders of them. The men, too, were gay: showy handkerchiefs tied loosely round the throat, with a careless Young Meadows sort of air, and as much colouring as possible forced into their usually sober dress. Kindly people all, men and maids; for though I had a huge green fan, spread pent-house fashion over my bonnet to save the necessity of holding up a parasol, which formed certainly a most grotesque head-dress, yet no one laughed, or seemed to think it ridiculous.

The hill above the town and the road farther on were full of market maidens,—two on a horse, eight in a cart, and so on; sometimes a pair of geese, harnessed a-breast like Venus's swans, occupied a

pack-saddle all to themselves; while their more plebeian brethren waddled along the high road, running with such inveterate obstinacy under our wheels, that it required some skill to get on without crushing them.

The object of our morning excursion was to visit the Château d'Angosse. Within two hours' drive (or thereabouts) of Nay, we quitted roads for lanes—and green ones, full of shade and sweetness, with tangled hedges and stumpy oaks, hazels and walnuts, changing to sweet woodland bits of broader shade and character. The lord of the castle, and of the forge valley that dives off from it, was absent; but we picked up his housekeeper in the market-place at Nay, who, knowing one of our party, kindly offered to precede us with the key of the house. She was on foot, so, to accomplish her hospitable purpose, sprang up on the first spare horse that presented itself; and mounting, like a Vendean heroine, with a foot in each stirrup, was off at a round pace, and waiting at her open porch *en vraie chatelaine* to receive us when we arrived. The latter part of the road to the castle is exquisite; broad river-stretches, or gleaming

ones of infinite beauty, the ever-varying mountains, peaked, rounded, in light, in shadow, and clustering together to set off the original and supreme view from the terrace that leads to the airily detached hamlet of St. Paul, whose small slated spire (the common ornament of the villages here) looks down upon the exquisite pastures, the swift and limpid brooks, and beautiful foliage of the vale below.

A little farther on we found the lonesome château; an old-fashioned manor-house, uninteresting in itself, but rising boldly above the valley and towered over by the higher mountains at whose base it stands, and within which it is enclosed, like the petal of a flower in its bell; dark and charming avenues, and mountain lawns, and home terraces, and lemon trees and vines, and a thousand beauties of stream and mill, and hut and tree; but above all, such a sweet character of solitude and peacefulness, strengthened rather than diminished by the monotonous fall of the hammer in the forge below. At first, all farther issue seems sealed up by the closing of the mountains; but the eye at length discovers, between their folds, the opening of a narrow gorge, not accessible to a

carriage, and described to us (for alas! we had not time or means to make acquaintance with it) as full of power and beauty. Deep in the gorge, in the heart of wild and romantic scenery, are the principal iron-works of the Marquis d'Angosse. He is himself now absent; but we tasted the excellent garbure, and profited by the manifold civilities, kindly and heartily offered, of his housekeeper; and, as the same tone usually pervades a family, each member imitating the model immediately above itself, in default of other proof I should not hesitate to judge most favourably of the high-bred and courteous hospitality of the master, by the mere demeanour of his servants. We passed a charming hour or two on his terrace, Boccaccio-ing it deliciously on the grass, and thinking how soft, and still, and lovely its utter solitude would be of an autumn day—a warm and mellow one, with sun-beams but no sun, only the rays stealing out from under the still clouds,—the purple eye-lids that shade the fountain of their light. In winter, when the mountains are covered with snow, and darkness lies upon the hollow, its gloom may be too severe and chilling; yet I can fancy it a happy hunter's

home even then, and can see the blazing fire, the easy chair, the tired dogs, and cheerful supper, through the summer sunbeams.

The housekeeper had no such imaginings,—dreary days, long nights still drearier, paths choked up with snow, and the *forgerons'* ladies exceedingly bad society. Nay still in a bustle as we returned; took the public road, (I mean the great one,) and crossing the bridge, admired the river that tears along from the mountains which close the scene; streams innumerable cross and recross the valley, sometimes *con amore*, at others caught and dyked, to help the purposes of berrêt and hat, and, I believe, cloth making; for the little town of Nay is Dutch in its industry as well as its apparent neatness, and hangs out flowers from its wooden balconies, and Spanish honeysuckle on its walls, very prettily.

March, 1836.—Since the above was written, we have passed many months in a paradise a short distance from Pau; a happy and delicious spot, where the eye and heart made quiet jubilee. I

have verified my sketches, and found them (to my thinking) correct, and assuredly not flattered. It would be no easy matter to overdo the sunset views from our terrace, or the effect of the moon rising between two masses of wood,—heavy and dark as hills, but identified by their outline of foliage,—the silent grove at evening, or the illuminated cupola of the Pic du Midi,* out-topping the fine gathering of mountains that close the southern view.

How often have I sat at fall of night, surrounded by those most dear to me, spelling the beautiful heavens, and looking across the valley at the turreted outline of the castle, traced in darkness on the pale grey sky; while the long tent-like roofs of Pau disappeared gradually from the landscape, and the air came to us loaded with the fragrance of the thousand flowers that grew about, and the broad-leaved catulpa showered down its blossoms at our feet. Sometimes we heard the gentle murmur of the Gave, as it went its way through the valley; sometimes a faint strain of

* The Pic du Midi of Pau; every little town in the mountain Pyrenees has its Pic du Midi, but that of Bagnères de Bigorre is the one par excellence.

music, or the sound of a horn, or the distant roll of the evening drum, borne across at intervals from the opposite town; or the mingled hum from the village of Geloz below, or a sweet voice singing old mournful jacobite melodies in delicious unison with the scene and hour. There are two pines in the landscape—the pines of Bizanos, which I loved to look at when the summer sky was over them, not only for their own sakes, but for the sake too of that sweet land where beauty is most beautiful; and then, when autumn came, how the woods burnished into gold, and the beautiful bid adieu to summer light how it lingered over the Bayonne quarter! O, the red light—or the golden one, how glorious it is!

Every day in this sweet country brings out fresh and unexpected beauties; every accident of light a new charm, every period its individual aspect of sweetness or magnificence; but autumn is its true season of loveliness,—where is it not so? —to my eyes at least, which better love its shaded beauty than the ripe rich glow of summer, or even than the budding sweetness of spring. I love autumn as the dying love life: I feel that it

will not stay long, and dwell on it with a melancholy delight, in which the sense of present love and coming loss are mingled together, giving a touching and unspeakable grace to its simplest beauties. There is a tenderness in its melancholy lights, an almost magical transparency in its clear ones, a poetry in all, which together exercise a powerful influence over the imagination. A farewell is always affecting, but so sweet a one as autumn gives is sad; yet in its sweet sadness there are touches of joy almost heavenly. When I look down on the fading woods, and upwards to the aëreal mountains and the blue sky above them, I feel as if I had nothing left of earth about me but its affections.

It is winter now, but my pines seem to know nothing about it, and to suit themselves to the black sky just as well as to the blue one. I have talked of sweet sounds—summer ones, when the sky flushed warmth and the catulpa shed its blossoms; now we have ungentle ones sometimes, and more ungentle accompaniments. I do not know what we call the *orfraie*—the bold bird that flies against the tempest, be it ever so fierce; but of

all night-birds it is the most alarming. The hootings of the owl are corn-flowers and summer twilight to its wild and desolate cry, and the mournful scream of the sea-gull love's messages. The orfraie, if by itself, seems to consider its solitude as something dangerous or horrible, and shrieks like an aged woman attacked by murderers; when two or three meet, then comes the orgie, and these wicked revellers shout like drunken peasants returning from a fair, or gurgle in their hollow throats like exasperated demons;—I say wicked revellers, because their cry is so full of alarm and crime; and, if such a sound be not the index of a cruel and ferocious nature, voice—which is the speech of birds, is no key to their meanings: the nightingale, instead of a sorrowing true love, may be a rakish flirt; and the gentle robin, whose pretty song is so full of household love, who hops on our window with a crumb of bread in its bill, and bids us good-morrow with its sweet friendly warble, an angry gad-about.

As for the orfraie, whether he be a croaking immorality, or a screaming mentor—sanctimonious as Colonel O'Kelly's parrot, I cannot take upon

me to say; but, such as he is, our grove has never been without him since winter came. Sometimes we have a crew of those midnight visitors, who generally appear with October: at first their shrieks startled me; but I got accustomed to the sound, and soon found their almost human shouts and hysterical laugh not unamusing, though ghastly. But what a sound to hear in the lone depths of a forest at midnight! or from the shrouds of a ship at sea, or from the dark waves that follow it; like the cry of a sea spirit prophesying drearily. I have heard these wizard birds carousing in a storm; but they prefer fine nights, and bully the moon and stars with most unhallowed mockery.

Amongst the old customs still in due observance in the Pyrenees, is one which usually takes place on Shrove Tuesday; when, if there happens to be a man in the country who has received a drubbing from his wife—and put up with it, he is seized upon by some of the sturdiest of his neighbours, placed upon an ass with his face turned towards the tail, and so paraded about; and, I believe, with the additional degradation of an explanatory

paper pinned to the back or breast. The huge Christmas log, steeped in wine, and set round with smaller ones in the form of a cross; the burning brand drawn out of the bonfire on St. John's Eve, and carefully preserved to feed the next year's blaze; the cross of flowers, nailed against the door on the same holy vigil to keep the witches out, are not forgotten in the Pyrenees: the blessed candle is still lighted in a storm; the corn standing in the fields still blest on Rogation Sunday, with prayer, incense, and holy water; St. Roch (or rather his representative) continues to bestow his benediction on the cattle; branches that have been switched in holy water still decorate the cottages at Easter; and many other homely and harmless superstitions, which one loves for their pleasant, old-fashioned associations —delightful ones, I think,—are carefully kept up in this beautiful, believing land. Another thing that I greatly love here is, the way which the people have of dating by their Saint's day; and, instead of saying it was the 5th of December, or the 2nd of February, counting from their calendar of holy records,—as the vigil of St. Nicholas, Le

Chandeleur, (our Candlemas,) the day after St. Martin, or the day of All Souls. The toll of the angelus often brings a thanksgiving to the lips of the shepherd who feeds his flock on the hills, and reminds the labourer in the fields of a pious duty. I have seen a young woman stop in the midst of her household cares, and breathe a short, but I have no doubt heartfelt prayer, when she has heard its distant sound. The invention of this beautiful custom of tolling the angelus at morning, noon, and evening, so that those who are employed in their daily occupations and are far away from churches, may join in thought with those who kneel within them, is due, strange to say, to Louis the Eleventh.

After the maize harvest is over, and the fields cleared, the peasants go about to their neighbours' houses, offering their gratis help to *égrener** it, and sit up all night in the barn, working, singing, drinking white wine (*vin du pays*), eating chestnuts, and telling stories. This cheerful custom does not belong to the superstitions of the people, but to their sociable and friendly habits, of which they

* To detach the grain from the stalk by friction.

have many, and all of a rustic character and colouring. There is a superstition, and not a pleasing one, which I thought belonged alone to Italy, but which I find is not unknown in the Pyrenees. Yesterday I was warned by a peasant-boy against taking flowers from some children who offered them to me. It was the custom, he told me, for any one who had a friend ill or dying, to tie up a small nosegay and put it into the hand, or the breast, of the sick person; and then offer it to the next comer, or throw it into the first carriage they chanced to meet with. The flowers are supposed to carry off the malady from the person afflicted, and to give it to the one who receives them. If another does not take the infection, the sick person cannot be cured. I had been in many places in Italy where this belief existed, but did not expect to find it here.

Finer things were formerly done in the way of superstitious observances in this country of the Pyrenees, when processions and pilgrimages were the necessities of the day; amongst those shone out the mysteries of Perpignan, long (as we are told) abolished, when the Black Penitents opened

the file, carrying the instruments of Christ's passion, and followed by various groupes exhibiting the flagellation in the judgment-hall, the crowning with thorns, the *Ecce Homo*,—which last was reserved for the nobles, who alone appeared as actors in it. The procession was closed by a person clothed in a violet-coloured robe, who represented our Saviour himself bearing his cross, with the daughters of Jerusalem going before, and a crowd of Roman soldiers, priests, torch-bearers, and musicians following after.

And now a bit of autumn from my apron-pocket notes. October 18th.—Turned out of the high-road, which we had taken for the sake of a sunning, and lighted on the sweet hamlet of Uzos,—a real hamlet; clear brook, embowering trees, and the church with its grave-yard, and a flat stone with the English name of "Susan Day" on it. How the foreign tomb breeds thought, and carries it to the foreign death-bed! Pleasant cottages, or other country dwellings, with a sweet inhabited look, are never wanting here; nor dun cows (a pale harmonious dun) ruminating idly, or flapping off the flies with their long tails. Came home through country

lanes: exquisite meadows, and nothing else,—between us and the côteaux of Jurançon,—mowing, last crop, and the shaven grass without a knot in it; smooth as velvet, green as spring, but a touch of russet on the woods that speaks, as every thing in autumn does,—the air, the sky, the deepening earth, the whistle of the last bird,—to both heart and fancy.

There is something pretty in the Spanish-sounding names of the places here: the valley of Geloz, the pines of Bizanos, the hamlet of Uzos, &c. Autumn fills the country with Spaniards, who beg or work—as it happens: wild and ugly people, but always picturesque.

19th. Donkeyed again:—give me autumn; nothing like it in the muster roll of seasons. An eagle sailed by my window this morning with a proud swim, as if he lay upon the air and commanded it to bear him forward. A now-a-days king, even in his ermine, is a menial in point of dignity to those fine creatures of the sky. I did not know that they came down to the lowlands, but find that my cloud king is an old acquaintance here,—an autumn one. An unimaginable evening as we turned homewards, finer even than the beau-

tiful morning. The Pic du Midi like a rock of precious stone,—all ingrained sapphire. What an altar of thanksgiving!

26th. Our marigolds are richer now than coronation robes: what shades of orange and of brown circling round and round, and concentrating all their hues in the heart of the flower—the common flower—that if it were a rare one would be thought so beautiful! We have still the velvet amaranthus, amber, rich burgundy purple, and ruby, glowing like the inside of a pomegranate or the precious stone itself; and hundreds of lilac, white, and purple things, to me nameless. Dahlias, too, and the fine geranium-tinted ones, *(rose saumonée,)* but not the variety that I have seen in England and other places: barberries like coral ear-drops, and the beautiful yellow-flowering plant which gardeners call cassia; but it is not the sweet, heavy-scented cassia of Provence. The palma-christi has still its grape-like bloom, rich stalk, and broad, graceful leaf; probably the one which the fairies choose when they set about roofing a ball-room. Oberon and Titania might lead off, and all their train follow, lavishly housed under the spread of a single one. Roses—and not all Bengal

ones, verbena and jasmine in full beauty, tube-rose and heliotrope enriching the terrace.

26th. Yesterday was a day for July to boast of; too warm for out-of-doors rambling, and at five o'clock like a sweet summer twilight at Naples. But this morning, such a tempest! At six o'clock it awoke me, as it came rushing up from the valley from Bayonne; sounding as if it was under the earth and above it, and in the heavens, and the trees, and every where. Catulpas, yesterday, full and almost verdant; and to-day the earth is covered with their broad eastern-looking leaf, curiously laid on by the chance wind, with almost the regularity of a carpet pattern.——A fortnight later; what a glorious day! soft glory, like the eyes of an angel: I have never seen one, but can fancy how it is. The forests still beautiful, the oaks green and gold, but the green uppermost; autumn flowers still glowing, and honeysuckle in blow in the hedges.

Companion spring bit, from the same apron-pocket.—March 3rd. Every thing announces the first break of spring in gentle rumours. Linnets, finches, and yellowhammers; some singing, some hopping, all pert and happy, and bright as

the beautiful budding things that already camp in the hedges with the pale but pretty yellow butterfly, and the small blue one or moth-like brown hovering round them. Honeysuckles in full blow in the road-side banks, and periwinkles blue as sapphires mixing with them. Anemonies, daffodils, narcissus, ranunculuses (double), the autumn primrose, which has never left us in the coldest season, violets of Parma and of the fields, polyanthus, and heaps of other sweet, early flowers, some of which have been in bloom for weeks past, enrich the garden. Hedges a mosaic of violets, wild strawberries, the beautiful green of the hellebore, young honeysuckle, *pied de chien*, and the fine leaf of the plant which we call *serpentine*,—large, boldly indented, and of a deep green, marbled with a thread of white, and a delicate natural varnish over all: almonds, in some places in and almost out of blossom, in less favourable spots only budding, and the beautiful single hyacinth—the alabaster of the garden, in abundance; so are all sorts of golden eyes. Sky bright, still, and soft; and in the air a harmony of loving covenants and gentle records. O for the sweet springs and autumns of the south!

CHAPTER XIII.

PAU TO LESTELLE—VILLAGES AND HAMLETS—COARAZE—LESTELLE—SEMINARISTS AND PILGRIMS—BETHARAM—ITS NIGHT SCENES AND MORNING DECORUM—HAWK MOUNTAINS AND EAGLE ONES—THE CASTLE OF LOURDES—OLD STORIES—A MAGNANIMOUS CHATELAIN AND A TREACHEROUS HOST—SOFT SCENES AND HANDSOME WOMEN—THE LOVE OF HOME.

MARCH.—Left Pau after breakfast; the Gave running along with us, and the mountains beckoning us forward. To-day they are like a land of shadows,—beautiful and vague; and the imagination, doubting their reality, asks "Are ye there, friends of my youth? are ye there, who have gone before me?" How often has, not only my fancy but my heart, questioned the passing clouds, the veiled mountains, and read sweet answers in their soft and changeful aspects,—how often, too, sad ones: but when the mind communes with the skies, there is always hope, down even at the root of its despondency; we feel and are sustained by it, though we do not always know that it is there.

At length the vapours disperse, the dark covering of heath becomes visible on the broad sides of the mountains, and the large clouds cast down their shadows in flying sheets on the variegated surface.

An open pleasant country to Lestelle, (three posts from Pau); wide plains of maize mixed with clover and meadow, and intersected or bounded by soft woods, or lines of poplar gracefully broken, villages and farm-houses solidly built, and trimly roofed with slates, wooden tiles, and sometimes thatch, and ornamented at each gable point with a small urn, or a ball, in wood or tin; these same gables (one-windowed sometimes, but often windowless) front the road, and the entrance door opens into the farm-yard, or the garden at the side; flowers, fruit-trees, and Italianized vines, but not much neatness in the arrangement; the farm-yard gate roofed at top in the old-fashioned way, with a repetition of the ornamental urn or ball at each end; a stone tablet usually over the house-door, with a cross, a flower, a star, or perhaps an inscription on it; and the unglazed windows often crossed with stone, as in many of the old towns in France.

The villages in the plains and on the high roads have all the same general character, differing only in the number of their houses, and of course in the beauty or pleasantness of their site. Sometimes a fine tree, or two or three perhaps, (oftenest oaks) decorate a green spot between the houses; and the oak-common is as frequent in some parts of the country as in England,—to say nothing of the goose-green with its rustic shade, and its home look, and its waddling population,—the fattest I have ever seen, but nothing (they say) to those of Lectoure and other places, where (as in Béarn) their unnatural folds of grease and swollen livers form a lucrative branch of commerce.

But it is in the green lane and the by one that the real Béarnais hamlet niches itself; the lane where, as the flock passes, the sheep leaves its wool upon the briars of the hedge, and the cart (if there be room for it) its long locks of hay on the bowery branches. There the brook babbles, and the roof is thatched; there is no scutcheon over the door, no tin ball, no wooden urn,—nothing fine but the gilt Virgin in the chapel, and the vermilioned infant in her arms.

Narrow as the track is, I must back out of it; and here we are again on the high road to Cauteretz,—cultivation and produce; but the best part of the picture, if one may say so, is the frame,—its first border formed by the delicious côteaux for which this region of the Basses Pyrénées is so famed, and the broad outward setting by the majestic mountains ledging backwards into more eminent dignity.

At Coaraze more actual,—I mean immediate beauty; the view from the bridge very lovely, and that from the terrace of the château still (and much) better. Here *Le Béarnais*, consigned to the care of Susanne de Bourbon, Baronne de Missons, his *gouvernante*, ran about with the peasant children bare-headed and bare-footed, ate brown bread, cheese, and garlick, and acquired those hardy habits that stood him in such good stead in after life. Nothing remains of the antique castle but a square tower and, it may be, a part of the walls; the more modern château is, like many others here, an ancient manor-house in aspect; with a side wood cresting the abrupt bank on which it stands; mountains in front, below a rapid

Gave, a mill, a bridge, and around a landscape full of sweetness and dignity. Further on is Lestelle, the last village of Béarn; and soon after Bigorre opens its valleys, the soft forerunners of its high mountain scenery. The priesthood seem to thrive here: passed at Lestelle a flourishing *séminaire:* windows turned to the road, and each, or nearly each, with a sleek figure in it; no apostolical heads, or diabolical ones either, but a show of round and rosy novices, looking as if they had a large stock of mental reservations, and could account for the cards in their sleeves as well as the Père André himself. Just opposite to this ecclesiastical forcing-house, the Gave makes a rapid sweep, and rushing through a single arch hung with streaming foliage, murmurs a hoarse accompaniment to the pious reveries of the youthful seminarists and their devout instructors,—pious or mundane, perhaps both; palms, crowns, and the shadowing wings of angels above; and beneath, the court confessional, the mitre, and the red hat.*

* The seminary no longer exists, the incipients sent elsewhere, and the house (to which a showy church is attached) consigned to missionaries and Spanish capucins.

Two or three months later, and the priests will be effaced by the pilgrims. On a mountain near to Lestelle is the chapel of Bétharam,* to which at certain periods of the year a pilgrimage is performed,—a pilgrimage of love, devotion, and jollity; where, after tears and prayers, and many outward acts of humility and contrition, comes a night spent pell-mell in the forest; a sort of camp-meeting, where litanies are mingled with sounds of unhallowed revelry, and the groans, and hymns, and murmured "Hail, Mary!" of the penitent and the devout, rise up amidst the licentious mirth of those who, using religion as a pretext, make orgies of its festivals. In the wildness or the stillness of the night, this scene, set off by the dark flying clouds or the red moon of an autumnal sky, must be strange and striking: lamps glimmering through the trees, marking false and misguiding tracks, and seeming to lengthen distance; fires burning on the edge of the forest, strange figures and strange sounds issuing from its undefined depths, must, combined with the accidents of light and darkness, produce a powerful effect, though one more in

* In the language of the country, *beautiful shade.*

unison with the mysteries of demonology, than with the pure and vestal spirit of true religion.

Basques, Béarnais, peasants from the mountains and valleys of Bigorre, often from those of Arragon or Catalonia, crowd to the holy chapel to beg a boon, or fulfil a vow, at the shrine of Our Lady of Bétharam,—the women covered with rosaries and scapulars; the men linked together arm-in-arm, chaunting their litanies, as they pass along, with most untuneable vehemence. Mary, "the blessed amongst women," is here, as in Italy, the almost exclusive object of adoration with the people of the mountains; in her they worship at once the chosen woman and the more than angel, claiming human tenderness from the one, and from the other divine protection.

In speaking of the night scenes of the mountain pilgrimages, (for Bétharam is but the duplicate of Heas, &c.), I have kept down my colouring, subduing as much as possible the strong tints which preceding sketchers, French too and eye-witnesses, have used to paint them with. True colours, every one tells us; but I must in justice add that some friends of ours, who trooped it there once with the pilgrims, found every thing as matter

of fact and prosaic as well could be. Great buying of rosaries and of crucifixes, and of toilette helps, too; neck pins and sevignés, and other ornaments prettily imagined, though of flimsy materials; but no enthusiasm, pious or otherwise,—no overflowings. It is true they were morning visitors, and did not wait for the inspirations even of twilight; but sober common-place was the order of the meeting,—at least while the sun shone.

A wooded valley, green and lonesome, opens at Lestelle. As we entered it, a hawk flew above our heads, and turning its yellow wings to the sun, floated over the woods like an autumn leaf. Old Vestris said beautifully of Taglioni, "Elle ne tombe pas, elle descend;" and certainly no artificial movements ever emulated the type which nature has given us in her winged creation, so happily as hers do: but my hawk lies upon the air as even Taglioni cannot; and its broad-winged downward flight, in which the will seems to act almost without muscular exertion, is grand and graceful beyond all human imitation.

I have always felt a strange and mysterious emotion on entering into the secrets of a mountain region, which has seemed but a little before like

something shadowy and unapproachable, a sort of going home of the soul. A grave and melodious voice speaks within it, welcoming strange scenes as if they were native ones, owning them as familiar, though we know not where they have been so, and hailing them with something of the sweet but serious joy with which the dead, who lived on earth, may meet in heaven. I feel it now, as the valleys of the Pyrenees open to receive us, and in its softest potency; for these are not mountains whose aspect threatens or appals, like those which I have sometimes seen in alpine countries, and never without an intense feeling of awe; they are to such, as the hawk, which still poises itself in the air above us like a messenger of vague but beautiful promise, is to the majestic eagle of those sterner regions. But all is enchanted ground, the revel ground of thought and fancy. I have long given away my heart to mountains; and though I may coquet it with the decorated bowers of art, yet the deep joy, the joy of ever-working thought, enamoured of the spirit which haunts the one, refuses to come at the butterfly bidding of the other.

The chain of low hills (the beautiful côteaux of which I have already spoken) that rises up immediately from the vale of Pau, is the first step of the great ladder; then comes the lower range of the Basses Pyrénées,—my hawk mountains, through whose avenues we ascend gradually, until we arrive at the great eagle ones: but we are not there yet, nor half-way scarcely; but as we get on they open before us, and the swift mind, outrunning the lagging body, has already made companionship with the mysteries of the shadowy region where Nature reveals herself in visions, and all the magic that dissolves in the open sunshine of the plains is made manifest.

The Gave is here all life and sparkle, and its sweet and varied banks a breathing pastoral. Overhanging it is the little town of St. Pé, once remarkable for its monastery, founded and richly endowed by Sance Guillaume, Duke of Gascony, who dedicated it to God, and to St. Peter, the prince of apostles, very Italian, with a squandering of marble about the humble door and windows, a ruinous-looking piazza, partly if not entirely surrounded by arcades, with bulged

balconies full of wet rags and broken flower-pots, and a dingy population in half-mourning, —black and white, or all black, being the favourite dress of the country folks. It has besides a castle, or its vestiges, and onwards a beautiful up-and-down country, with the Gave playing at hide and seek through low green meadows, or along the base of the fine up-spreading woods that cover the hills, and sometimes two thirds of the mountains behind them, with their amplitude of shade.

The castle of Lourdes, which guards the entrance to the high Pyrenees, stands on a bold perch in a lonely pass of the valley, with a hot town clambering up after, or rather on one side of it, whose roofs seem to quiver in the vertical sunbeams. The castle itself is one of the historical features of the Pyrenees; it has been the servant of many masters, erected (as it is believed) by the Romans, possessed by the Counts of Bigorre, afterwards by Simon de Montfort, and for a long period by our Edward the Third, to whom it was made over at the peace of Bretigny, when King John of France (taken prisoner at the battle of

Poitiers) was redeemed from captivity; and with the English it remained, as long as they continued to retain any part of their possessions in Aquitaine.

It was a brave garrison that of Lourdes, and when the wars of Guyenne were renewed, kept its stand famously; and many a Robin Hood *chevauchée* did the merry men make from their stronghold, laying the whole country round under contribution, as Messire Espaing pleasantly recounted to Messire Jehan Froissart, as they journeyed peacefully along from the city of Paumiers to the town of Orthez.* The Abbot of Gascony, and his four monks, who put up at the hostel of the Angel at Montpellier, and would insist on treating the honest Sire Barenger to his journey to Paris, is worthy of Don Raphael and his co-mate Ambroise de Lamela. To speak truth, the chieftains of those days were little more (the ceremonies of war apart) than hardy freebooters, with troops to match them; who were singularly expert at running away with their enemies, and holding them fast till the ransom came.

In the broils of Béarn, Foix, Armignac, &c.,

* Chroniques de Froissart.

and even in the higher-pinioned wars of Aquitaine, when those lawless bands, called free companions, lived on plunder, and, selling their services to the best bidder, scoured the country in the name of one bold captain or another, this irregular mode of warfare was tremendous work sometimes. But the jolly garrison of Lourdes seemed to have liked fun, at least as well as bloodshed and battery. Here are a Gascon's reasons for loving the service of the English king better than the French one; he had served the first in Aquitaine, and had turned round to the last,—"Dieu mercy ie me porte assez bien; mai i'auoye plus d'argent (et aussi auoient mes gens) quande ie faisoye guerre pour le roy d'Angleterre, que ie n'ay maintenant; car, quand nous cheuauchiōs à l'aventure, nous trouuions aucuns marchans riches de Toulouze, de Condon, de la Riolle, ou de Bergerath. Tous les iours nous ne faillons point, que nous n'eussions quelque bonne prise, dont nous étions frisques et jolis."

There is a fine trait recorded in the archives of Lourdes,—a calm and glorious one; and is not the calm of courage more glorious than its storm?

more morally grand, as more detached from passion, more rising out of the root of principle? —to me it seems so. I have always found something amazingly noble in that courage, which, after having examined, counted, weighed the dangers it has to face, ends by despising them—or better still—by opposing them with a cool firmness, nothing shaken by the perfect knowledge of their magnitude.

When the Black Prince sojourned at Tarbes with his fair wife, it came into his fancy to visit the castle of Lourdes, which, from its remarkable strength, and the facilities afforded by its frontier position of access into Arragon and Catalonia, ranked as a strong-hold of material consequence. When he had well examined it, he called to him a certain knight of his household, who had served him loyally and in whom he had entire faith, a native of Béarn, named Pierre Ernaut, a man expert at arms, and cousin of the famous Gaston Phœbus Comte de Foix, and thus addressed him: "Messire Pierre, à ma venue en ce pays ie vous institue et fay Chatelain et Capitaine de Lourde, et Regard du pays de Bigorre. Or gardez tellemēt le

chastel que vous en puissiez rẽdre bõ cõpte à Monseigneur mon pere, et à moy."—"Monseigneur," dit le cheualier, "volõtiers." La lui en fit foy et hõmage: et le Prince l'en mit en possessiõ. And well he merited the trust. For when war broke out again between the kings of France and England, and two powerful barons of Bigorre—Marnaut Barbesan, and the Sire d'Anchin, having gone over to the French side, seized upon the castle and city of Tarbes, feebly defended for the king of England, Pierre Ernaut held out bravely, nor could he in any way be tempted to swerve from the duty to which he had bound himself. When the Duke d'Anjou laid siege to Lourdes, in 1374, the town was taken and burned, but all his efforts against the castle were fruitless. Then did the Count de Foix, whose interest it was to obtain the favour of the duke, send for his cousin, the captain and chatelain of the fortress, who, seeing no means of disobeying the mandate, set out, but with sore misgivings, for Orthez; where he was courteously received and sumptuously entertained by his noble host. After four days of feasting and revelling, the Count de Foix, in the presence of several of

his courtiers, thus addressed his guest:—" Ie vous ay mandé, Pierre; et vous estes venu. Sachez que Monseigneur d'Anjou me veut grand mal pour la garnison de Lourde que vous tenez, et biẽ pres en a esté ma terre toute courue: si ce n'eussent esté aucuns bons amis, que n'ay eus en sa cheuauhée, et sa parolle, et l'opinion de plusieurs de sa compagnie qui me hayent, disans que ie vous soustien, pourtant que vous estes de Béarn, et ie n'ay que faire d'auoir la malveuillance de si haut Prince, comme est Monseigneur le Duc d'Anjou. Si vous fay commandment en tant que vous vous pouuez meffaire enuers moy, et par la foy et l'hommage que vous me deuez, que le chastel de Lourde vous me rendez."

Quand le Cheualier ouït cette parolle, il fut tout ébahy, et pensa vn petit, pour savoir quelle chose il respondroit, car il veoit bien que le Comte de Foix parlut à certes. Toutesfois tout pensé et consideré, il dit, " Monseigneur, vrayemẽt ie vous doy foy et hommage, (car ie suis un poure Cheualier de vostre sang et de vostre terre,) mais le chastel de Lourde ne vous rẽdraye-ie ià, vous m'auez mãdé, si pouuez faire de moy ce qu'il vous plaira, ie le tiens du Roy d'Angleterre, qui m'y a

mis et estably, et à personne, qui soit, ie ne le rendray, fors à luy."

Quand le Comte de Foix ouït ceste response, si luy mua le sang de felonnie et de courroux, et dit en tirãt hors vne dague; "Ho, ho! traistre, as tu dit que non? par ceste teste tu ne l'as dit pour riens. Et adonc ferit il de sa dague sur le Cheualier par telle façon qu'il le navra moult vilainemẽt en cinq lieux, n'il n'y auoit là Baron ne Chevalier, qui osast aller au devant." Le Cheualier disoit bien; "Ha, ha! monseigneur, vous ne faites pas gentillesse, vous m'auez mandé, et m'occiez. Toutes fois il eut ces cinq coups d'vne dague. Si commanda le Comte qu'il fut mis en la fosse: et y fut mis, et y mourut, car il fut pouremẽt curé de ses playes."

The brave and faithful chatelain lay dead in the fosse; but the castle of Lourdes was not the more the Duke of Anjou's for that; for Pierre Ernaut had left a brave and unflinching brother behind him, Jean de Béarn, to whom he had entrusted the command in his absence, and whom, (foreseeing the treachery of the Comte de Foix,) he had made take an oath to defend it for King Edward to the

last gasp. An oath gallantly kept: and the duke finding himself repulsed at all points, raised the siege, and turned his arms in another direction.

Some sweet preliminaries introduce Lourdes; grey rocks—not the worse for a little severe pencilling,—pleasant fields, a winding river, and, at the opening of the valley, the castle all alone on the rock, and the rock with its base in the green and running water. Soft meadowy openings; still, verdant, and umbrageous; and after the grey rocks the green valleys, and the ever-graceful and beautiful Gave, and the soft hill-sides openly wooded, and the sheltered crags behind.* Farther on, a profuse and vagrant vegetation; large oaks, too, and the rocks and ruins, the fresh streams and fertile pastures of the charming valley of Argelez—the first and loveliest of the Lavedan,—with a wide chain of lofty Alps darkening the distance, some clear or streaked across with clouds, others looking through a veil thin as the gauze of the morning. A rich tufting of box on the rocks, and a velvet

* Guide-books talk of grottoes and a lake near to Lourdes; but we did not see either, so I cannot say whether or not they merit a visit.

darkness in the atmosphere, as we approach the great mountains, ineffably lovely; the walnut and Spanish chestnut in great growth and beauty, and the fig and vine making fellowship with the homelier pear and russet.

There are days especially favourable to beauty, when almost every woman that one meets seems handsome; others, when the run of ugly faces is equally remarkable. I have observed this in public gardens, ball rooms, &c., a hundred times,—so no doubt have others,—without being able to account for it; this is beauty-day; the women of Lourdes looked like a picked battalion, but confident, with fierce madrasses tumbling over their handsome eyes; a challenging head-dress of a piece with their faces.

What a delicious country this is, and how the people of it must love their homes! and when chance sends them from it, how they must remember, like the children of Israel, their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills, and think of the cold flowing waters of their valleys; and having known and loved such things, how they must turn away mournfully from others!

Yet, after all, it is not because our native land is beautiful that we love and long for it, but because it is our own. I once saw a man sitting by a cold hearth in a cabin built of loose stones, through which the wind blew where it listed, and so thinly thatched that the rain came in at one side and made pools on the floor. He was an Irish beggar, and the guardian of a holy well, once much frequented, but his saint having fallen into disrepute, his trade was low: however, he had a warm corner yet, (he said,) pointing to a part of the clay-floor which was not positive mud; and as to the roof, he would put some big stones on it before the winter came, and make it tidy. His food was potatoes, often not overmuch of those; but he observed, that it was ten times better than England, any way. England was fine, but there was no heart in the place; by which I suppose he meant bones, for he exclaimed, "From my own door I can see the place where my father and my grandfather are buried; and though the land I live upon belongs to a stranger, it was every foot of it our own in King James's time." Calypso's island would have been no recompense to this poor man for the

loss of the old land, and the graves, and the holy well which he swept round daily and garnished, even though no pilgrims came to it. How beautifully are all things ordained! The barren moors never brightened by flowers, the cold sea shore where the salt weed clings to the glistening rock, are as dear to the heart of whose first feelings they were mute witnesses, as the paradise of Argelez to those who have been cradled in its beauty.

CHAPTER XIV.

VALLEY OF ARGELEZ — BEGGARS — PIERREFITTE — THE GORGE OF CAUTERETZ—CAUTERETZ—WATERING-PLACE IMPORTUNITY.

THE valley of Argelez, renowned for its beauty and beautiful as its renown, which few vaunted things are, opens with the tower of Vidacoz, and taking at once its full breadth, spreads into a basin, whose only visible entrance is through the gorge of Lourdes. It is a soft home-scene of peaceful and abundant loveliness, overlaid with broad meadows and fields of grain, and full of the soft imagery of pastoral life, cheerful habitations, cattle, woods, and streams; gaining a high poetical character from the mountains which enclose it, and a gentle and lovely one from the border hills that, detached from the loftier heights, lapse along, advancing their wooded sides towards the eye, or retreating from it to shelter the low roof or the slender spire within their rooky hollows. One

upland has a ruin, another a hamlet, a third a chapel, a fourth a convent-looking house with an old church clinging to it; it is the Abbey of St. Savin, or was once; and how beautiful it is, seen from the road! though not like an abbey either; but like a lovely spot to live and die in, looking upwards to the mountains and the sky, and down upon the swelling fields, dressed in that air of quiet abundance that comes out of the overflowing of fruitfulness.

What a poet's dream it would be to live in one of the loneliest niches of this valley, for the sake of the hours of thought to which such a scene of sweetness, and such a life of leisure, might give bright spring and dear continuance; neighbouring the mountains, angling in the stream, and nursing oneself (as old Isaac did) with pleasant fancies and sweet homely images, that turn out poetry when one is not thinking about it; while a neat hand in the cottage on the pebbly brink savours the simple supper, and the bright fire-light, seen through the open door, tells of its preparation. If I was a poor student, and a young one, instead of being a woman, and no youth, I think I should desire nothing better. But there are two things necessary

to make such a life a happy one,—a meditative spirit and a contented mind: to which I would add the faculty of admiration, which finds beauty and good in objects, that to common natures seem barren of either.

The little town of Argelez is in a charming position, suiting its sweet climate, which is said to be the mildest in the mountain districts, the Pisa of the Pyrenees, where the snow (we are told) never lies for more than a few hours. By and by we shall return and look about us here, for the country round is too lovely to be merely passed through. Great beauty towards Pierrefitte and about it; fine undulating mountain-screens and dark defiles, leading the mind into the land of promise. A board, hung up at the inn gate, informs travellers that "la mendicité est ici défendue;" and as a proof of the respect paid to the prohibition, a crowd of unfortunate creatures gathered round us, each clamorously producing some undeniable certificate of wretchedness.* But of what may we not be vain in this world! A

* The prohibition has (I conclude) been since enforced; nothing visible now but little girls, who assail passers by with nosegays.

poor boy in the crowd shows his maimed hand, and has scarcely done so, when a woman pushes in before him; and, eyeing the twisted limb with contempt, cries out, "It is nothing! Look at this child in my arms: she has the legs of a goat!" There is no suffering in her voice, no pity, no sense of peculiar misfortune: the tone of triumph is unmixed. Madonna Donati scarcely threw back "the maiden's veil" more proudly, than the mendicant her cloak; in her earnestness to prove her child's pre-eminence in deformity, she absolutely forgets to beg,—her whole soul is in her glory. I do believe there are some people for whom sorrow is too deep a feeling; who are (as Shakspeare says) "incapable of their own distress:" this woman is, I think, one of them.

But beggars are in general careless thinkers: had she been a hard-working mother, the poor child would have hung upon her (as well it might) like a grief; but trading beggars turn their troubles to account, and when the shame is over—if it ever has been there,—prefer starving liberty and open air, to better-fed servitude and confinement. Begging is, like gaming, an exciting trade:

the beggar turns out in the morning to play his game of hazard, has a run of luck, follows it up with spirit; begs for his supper, his brisk fire, his evening draught, as others game for them; if ill luck comes, abuses it, but hopes for better; every moment is a fresh chance, every face that approaches, a turn of the cards: like the gamester, chance is his fountain of hope; but unlike him, the beggar risks nothing. Thus his spirits are kept afloat, and if he can but raise the supplies, he is never scrupulous about the means by which he does so,—his own eloquence, or his child's infirmities,—no matter which, or what.

There are beggars whom real distress forces from the hovel where shame would have detained them; of such I would be the last to speak lightly, but the accomplished professors are fair game. A friend of mine once accosted the celebrated *asker* at the end of the Rue de Richelieu, with a brief inquiry as to his dinner that day, "Et le roti—un rognon de veau—n'est ce pas?"—"Pardon, monsieur; un gigot de pré salé, si je me souviens bien:" i. e. mutton fed on salt marshes, and reckoned peculiarly delicate.

At Pierrefitte a dark mountain separates the gorge of Luz (often called the valley of Barèges) from that of Cauteretz. We entered the latter by a very steep road overhanging the border of green meadows that lie along the brink of the river. This is the place to talk of clear brooks and jibing streams, flying off mockingly from the eye that would fain keep up with their swiftness. Higher up, the gorge narrows, and the rocky sides are wooded down to the edge of the waters, which go on battling their way through some fine deep-toned scenery. Here are the climbing lawns, bright verdure, and single trees of Switzerland; and the sound of the rough torrent coming up from below, and mingling with the song of birds in the wild bushes. Lindens and ash-trees beautiful, making bowers over the boiling stream; but beautiful above all the green uplands,—satin, velvet, emerald—what you will, nothing too bright for the comparison; dotted lightly over with huts of rude construction, but so much more in keeping with wild spots than trimmer things, and so softly coloured. They are not habitations, but sheds for fodder, and are usually shaded by bou-

quets of foliage, or half hidden by the airily branching walnut, or the dark boughs of the oak or chestnut tree, through which the dusky gable or homely thatch comes peeping with its ballad of a shepherd's life written on it. There is one spot on the left bank of the torrent, a rare one, with a cabin on it, so shaded, so literally and deliciously embosomed, that——But I grow too young, and besides see somebody tittering in the corner: so mum!

There is no faculty of the mind so fluctuating (I mean with respect to external objects) as judgment, so influenced by immediately preceding impressions. After a long stay at Paris, and a journey through an open country, our fancies, though pulled up by the valleys of Béarn, are still perhaps not sufficiently screwed to the comparison pitch to estimate justly. This close defile into which we have just passed from the wide and fruitful valley of Argelez, seems to us almost like a sunshiny hundredth cousin—(mind *hundredth*) of the Via Mala; this probably comes from cornfields and vineyards, and white daisies and yellow butter-cups, and diminished fancies breeding weak

comparisons, and so on. The sun, who does not love the Via Mala, makes, at certain hours of the forenoon, a scene of his own of this gorge, pouring broad daylight into it, and burnishing up its high bits and edges into marvellous brightness; from all which it comes, that though deep, sometimes sterile, and—but for its torrent—still and sullen too, when the noon is passed; yet there is, if I may so express myself, a character of resignation about it, as if it would let the sky do as it pleased, and make it sad or cheerful at will,—perhaps the most opposite of all aspects to the stationary and mysterious gloom and brooding grandeur of that startling solitude, with whose might and majesty I have incautiously associated this comparatively gentle, though striking and impressive scene.

Another steep and twisted ascent, called Le Limaçon, makes our springs creak; but the road itself is good, and by and by a better one is to be cut through the hill, which will level matters, or at least soften them: marble quarries at the Limaçon and sombre hollows, pines running up the mountains in irregular triangles, or in dark lines multiplied till they become masses. After the Limaçon,

the mountains lose in grandeur and in beauty, but redeem their character as we approach Cauteretz, looking boldly over each other's shoulders, and one with a fine pyramidal front closing up the valley.

Higher up in the gorge we found the little town of Cauteretz lying along the edge of a sparkling torrent that still calls itself by the general name of Gave. The mountains form a basin, receiving the cluster of habitations within its hollow, and just allowing room for itself and its meadows to take their places on the brink of the river, which dashes on without slackening its pace to inquire if the houses have room enough. The fancy, though somewhat repressed by the close vicinity of those natural ramparts, is not chilled by monotony; the folds of the mountains are noble, multiplied, and graceful; the lines free and varied; pleasant woods and green lawns hang about, making bright points and lighting up the heavy masses; and cabins, not so elaborately picturesque as the chaumières of the Swiss Alps, but all that is necessary for the scene, repose as if by invitation on the most agreeable spots.

Cauteretz, though by no means in the highest class of mountain scenery, is grandly guarded;

the majestic and beautiful Pic de Pegeyra, fills up the head of the valley, making a fine natural pyramid wooded from the base to the peak, and presenting itself with a lordly, yet not unwinning aspect. It is a sweet little goat's-whey sort of place, almost at the end of its world, and with few visitors at present,—for which we return thanks. When we stopped at the hotel, I felt no small alarm; all the horrors of a watering-place came upon me:—washer-women thrust in their list of prices, hawkers their list of goods; some hoped to furnish us with cream, others pressed us to subscribe to the *Cercle;* one man burst into the room, assuring us that he was the original *Wauxhal,* and two capuleted matrons, who had been long prowling about the door, had all but made good their spring, when I took leave to turn the key on their project, and shut them out. At supper we were serenaded by some wandering minstrels from the old troubadour country of Toulouse,—no mean musicians, and so we overlooked their intrusion; though two violins and a guitar in the half-open door way, and a bowing child holding out her canister, are not always the most desirable addi-

tions to the regular inn supper of roast chicken and fricandeau, which, though probably the exact repetition of the early dinner, is sure to be attacked with a ready appetite, that could well dispense with lookers on.

This morning we turned into an angle dignified by the appellation of *La Place*, and the hubbub has subsided into the repose that becomes a nook in the mountains.

CHAPTER XV.

CAUTERETZ, CONTINUED—LA PLACE DE CAUTERETZ—MINERAL SPRINGS—CHAISES A PORTEUR—NEW MODE OF BEGGING—DEARTH OF WALKS—THE PARC—CLIMATE—COUNTRY LADS—WHY HANDSOMER THAN COUNTRY LASSES—HUNTERS OF THE PRESENT TIME AND THE PAST—OWLS AND WISDOM—THE BALLAD—WORDS AND MEANINGS.

THE scene which passes every day in our angle is not without character. As soon as the sun is abroad, the red capulets begin to move about loiteringly, each with a small distaff, or a bundle of worsted to sell; they are chiefly strangers, who come here for the benefit of the waters, bringing with them the portable implement of industry, the aforesaid distaff, without which a countrywoman of the Pyrenees is rarely seen. These red hoods are always in evidence; but dealers from Barèges, who come over the mountains with their light warm shawls, dresses, &c. of the stuff especially

called *barèges*, and their pretty knit counterpanes, mingle with them, showing off their wares and tempting ramblers, already overloaded, to buy what they afterwards do not know what to do with. The first sunbeams see the chairmen (who ply between the town and the baths) flying off with their fragile machines and muffled ladings; Spanish shepherds, who step in from Arragon to drink of the springs, stand about grandly, flinging their blankets round them with the air of Velasquez cavaliers; madrassed girls run up and down with cakes or coffee; herdsmen of the mountains parade their merchandise, consisting perhaps of a dozen small cheeses, soft and curdy, each tied up in a clean white cloth, and suspended in a row on a pole which the bearer carries on his shoulder. At every moment a window opens, and a nimble-fingered knitter throws her stocking over the ledge; or a blind is closed against the attacks of the strengthening sun.

Sometimes the drum beats, as it were, to arms; but it is only the *valet de ville* who proclaims an order of the mayor, a dog strayed, or a shawl stolen. Sometimes a party full of pic-nic antici-

pations, dash by to break merry-thoughts, and if possible hearts, in the shades of the Pont d'Espagne. Perhaps the mystery of the merry-thought may not be known here; but I once heard a pretty little girl say, (talking of a pic-nic,) "You can't think how delightful it was; we had so many cold chickens, and we did nothing but break the funny-bone (i. e. merry-thought), to find out who should be married first." At mid-day windows are carefully shut, blinds closed, and (according to the general custom in southern countries) light and air carefully excluded; a few native peasants looking in their flat berrêts as Highland as auld Robin Grey, and a light sprinkling of capulets, are the only things in movement; but as evening draws on, come motion, freshness, and colouring; huge Spanish-looking coaches arrive, stuffed with passengers, chiefly peasants or persons of the poorer classes, who come here for a course of baths, and bring their live-stock with them in paniers,—cocks, hens, ducks, enough to feed their proprietors during their stay: the same room serves for all, and the bipeds are killed off as occasion requires.

Often four or five of these coaches arrive together,

and discharge their cargoes under our windows. Some are made up of poor strangers, who look about with a cloudy, perplexed air, as if they knew not where to go to; others of luckier folks, who find friends waiting for them, and are off after a hug, and a shake-out of the garments. A few have a parting squib with the driver, who being probably paid for his places before hand, usually leaves such fares to take care of themselves. But when a berline or calèche arrives, then comes the tug of war, and the clatter of swift feet on the pavement; lodging-letters, traiteurs'-maids, and washer-women, are all in commotion; and if the carriage happens to have an outside step, like the chariot of an old-fashioned physician, the most alert instantly jumps upon it, and thrusts in *her* card; while a dozen others pull at the tail of her petticoat, or try to fling in *theirs* over her shoulder.

Pretensions considered, apartments are dearer here than in Paris: four or five hundred francs a month is frequently given for apartments, which would not there, with the same poor and insufficient furniture, bring two. As the season lasts only two or three months, the house proprietors

consider themselves as perfectly justifiable in making the most they can of their brief harvest; with September, all is over: in the early part of the month the great clearance takes place, if it has not been before-hand with it; and those who linger on to the end are usually quiet people of the country, not worth plucking. A little later, the bears come down and do the honours of the mineral springs to each other; and the communication with Pierrefitte (the only carriage one which Cauteretz has with the world) is blocked up against wheels, and often, if the snow lies deep, against feet also. Those who remain, live (we are told) something as the farmers do in the fell dales of Cumberland, packed up with their live stock; while the lucky ones, who can afford to strike tents, take up their winter-quarters at Tarbes, or Lourdes, and wait there for the general dissolution.

Mineral springs abound here, but the popular one is La Rallière, (an easy walk from Cauteretz, and higher up in the valley,) where there is a handsome bathing establishment. At half-past seven this morning, perhaps much earlier, the colonnade on which the baths open was thronged

with invalids, all putting a good face on the matter. I did not see a crutch, nor a single visage of the true Cheltenham tarnish, which made me reflect on the blessings that we derive from our East India possessions. The waters of the Rallière have the reputation of working wonders in bilious and rheumatic, as well as various other maladies; perhaps the morning air, gentle exercise, and healthful life led here, though they do not share the honours of the cure with the hot springs, may go quite as far in promoting it.

A rough straw chair upon poles, with two or three hoops stretched over it, and covered with a thin floor-cloth, is the usual conveyance of the sick or the lazy; and from the equal, alert, and exercised step of the chairmen, becomes a most agreeable one. Quite a coming-and-going bustle on the road to the Rallière this morning. In one chair an old sibyl of most sorceress-like aspect, wrapped in her black capuchon, the scarlet lining slightly visible, and nothing wanting but a few cabalistic characters on her broad forehead-cloth; in another, a young officer, with whom the ugly guns seemed to have made foul work; in a third,

a weighty dame, *en papillotes*, concealing her unarranged charms under a thick green veil; two children squabbling in a fourth, with a girl trotting along by their side talking unavailing reason; and behind, a file of bonneted nightcaps that said nothing.

Many were on foot covered with their long mantles. There is something very striking in the front view of this mantle, and very noble in the broad unbroken fold that falls from the head to the feet, giving a grand and mystical effect to the distant solitary figure, which, as it is seen descending the mountain path thus enveloped, looks like a veiled Isis just stepped down from its pedestal. Higher up than the Rallière is the spring of the Mahourat; and higher still, that of Bois. The Mahourat is particularly mild, and probably does neither good or harm; but this valley is so rich in mineral springs, boasting so many, and of such various virtues, that every malady incident to human nature may hope to find a remedy, or at least an alleviation within its bosom. Should the Mahourat, or the Petit St. Sauveur, be too feeble, there is la Rallière, le Bois, le César, les Espagnols,

le Bruzaud, and I do not know how many more; in short, every meadow, every hill, has its source or sources.

As we returned, a woman, who was making hay in a field by the road side, threw off a few notes in a high shrill key that made the air ring. She was not golden-mouthed; but I thought her song might be one of the Pyrenees, and remembering the exquisite melody that E—— picked up in the mountains, listened anxiously. But the words soon became too distinctly audible to admit of any romantic associations: it was neither more nor less than a petition for a halfpenny, trolled out with a sort of Lucy Locket sauciness; and with a laugh at the end of it, which showed the petitioner's carelessness as to the success of her *date obolum*. But, joke or earnest, there is (I suspect) a begging tendency here, though perhaps no stark, arrant, downright beggars. The children are ingenious tormentors: this evening a little girl, sleek and saucy as a page, asked me for a sous; L—— gave her two, and she immediately cried out, " N'avez vous pas un autre?" which, it appears, is not an unusual translation of our 'thank you,' in these

pastoral regions. He refused her for conscience-sake, and off she sprang like a chamois, and joining a group who sat decorating a bank in a hay-field close by, clustering their gay madrasses, and making a point somewhat brighter than a patch of tulips, seized on another girl, and whirled her round on the sharp edge of a steep descent, gathering the wind in her full petticoat, and lavishing her rough graces with much more effect than her ungainly figure, seen in its stillness, seemed capable of producing.

If a walk in the meadows were feasible, it would be lovely; for they are worked in with flowers of a thousand hues, and every tuft of grass is ornate with bright greenhouse-looking things, that tempt the eye to run in delightfully among them; in which pleasant excursion it would be followed by the feet, did not innumerable rills cross and recross each other at every ten or twenty paces, moistening the turf so effectually, that sometimes a dry spot is as hard to find as in the days of Noah's dove. Notwithstanding the inconveniences attending this exuberant irrigation, the eye reposes with gratitude on the beautiful verdure nourished by its abun-

dance. It is not the uniform verdure of Switzerland, but the meadows have a charming freshness; and here and there in the hollows, or lying on the sides of the mountains, are patches of green that look like carpets of rich velvet spread by dewy fingers.

The chief want here is of a greater variety of near walks; if a path winds along the base of a mountain, it is probably so rugged as to be almost impassable, at least for an invalid; a stroll along the banks of the wild river is still less practicable; so that, if the road that leads towards Pierrefitte (at this moment the favourite promenade) does not take the fancy, or that it tires of the one that leads to the Rallière, there is nothing left but the Parc, beautiful as far as it goes, and forming a sweet and quiet selvage to the high hills; but not extensive or varied enough to prevent the roving wish from outstripping its limits.

In the evening, when the air is still warm and full of melody, this walk is particularly pleasing; the murmur of the bright and beautiful Gave encircles every thing, filling up all pauses of sound, yet becoming itself, from the very constancy of its

rush, as unperceived as stillness. The birds, with busy or with skimming wing, work their way homewards, each after its own fashion; some with uninterrupted flight, others making every bough a resting-place; while the shadows spreading upwards over the face of the mountains, seem to follow the last sunbeam as it fades away from its summit.

This is a delight of a climate,—such mornings and evenings! fresh as the shade-loving flowers, but without either cold or humidity; and the hottest hours tempered by a soft stirring air, that revives without exciting. If climates were to be described by flowers, as feelings, wishes, passions are in oriental countries, I would express in sun-loving garlands of the Persian dahlia, the rich rose, the warm pomegranate, the glow and fervour of the balmy south, where the Mediterranean glitters; but for the Pyrenees I would reserve hare-bells and violets, brook-springing daisies, and the cool convolvulus; and if I could find 'a little western flower,' a modest grey one, with a blush of evening red upon its leaves, I would add it to my wreath as a symbol of twilight, usually the only

charm wanting to a southern climate, but enjoyed here in something of its protracted sweetness.

Met some very fine men to-day, superb specimens of the peasant of Bigorre, with Tam O'Shanter bonnets, and hair floating. "I saw my Jamie's wraith" over and over again, but no Jeannie. I take it for granted that much less of the raw material of beauty goes to make a handsome man than a pretty woman, for it is remarkable—at least in France, and I think in Italy—* how much better looking the peasant men are, than the women of the same class. Perhaps a moral feeling may mingle with our view of the subject, though we may not be aware of it. A soldier or a labourer does not appear to us less seemly for being somewhat weather-beaten,—indeed it may even become him, as paleness does a nun, or scars a warrior: but a weather-beaten, overworked woman, with the severities of toil and season in her face, seems a being wronged by fate,

* I will not say England, not being sure of my ground there; besides, our country girls bonnet out the sun, and except the pretty trade of hay-making, know little of field labour.

and forced into unnatural circumstances. Exuberant freshness is frequently the chief beauty of a peasant girl: this freshness lost, as it speedily is, the girl grows plain if she be not really and legitimately handsome, and we miss the womanlike charm which mental refinement gives to the countenance and movements; while the youth redeems his homeliness by a manly bearing, befitting his state and habitual occupations.

Perhaps, after all, this idea may be a fanciful one: our own reasons always appears to us reasonable, and arguments which might probably be unhorsed by a 'fudge,' seem to our parent hearts screwed to the very sticking point.

We should not believe ourselves in the Pyrenees, if we did not occasionally discuss a bear hunt. But a bear hunt now, is not what I supposed it to be, or what it probably is in winter time,—a general gathering, a call of hunters starting up from fen and fern, scouring the forests, running along the edges of the glaciers, and making the ice ring as their hardy footsteps pass over its crackling surface; but rather a solitary pleasure, sometimes pursued by a single hunter, at others shared by

two or three companions in enterprise. There is a hunter here of high renown,* who, a few days ago, shot a magnificent animal as it came looking for its fate down a gulley in the mountains, and courteously threw itself in the way of the enemy,—very polite in old Bruin, who was perhaps crossed in love, or disappointed in politics. This mountain Esau is deeply versed in all the mysteries of his craft, and kills, skins, extracts the grease, and turns every inch of his victim to account in a masterly style. An old hunter, whose memory is revered in the mountains, bequeathed to him all his secrets,—a better legacy for a hardy peasant than the philosopher's stone, with its entail of dangers and anxieties.

It was in the mountains of Béarn (neighbours to Bigorre) that Henri Quatre hunted wolves; and I still see him doffing his bonnet reverently, and making the sign of the cross, before he departed for the chase. Such (it is said) was his custom; and if so, one probably adopted by an imagination pleased with this believing and affectionate expres-

* Since killed by the falling of a rock, while in pursuit of an izard.

sion of a sentiment independent of, and unchanged by, forms. There too the famous Gaston Comte de Foix, likened to Phœbus for his beauty, hunted his way to paradise,* making the old mountains echo to the sound of his horn; for in those days nobles cultivated (as we are told) the art of blowing on this forest instrument, which belongs to the woods as a piano does to the drawing-room; and Gaston himself, in his quality of poet, lauds the performance of the great hunter Huet de Nantes, and of his bold compeer the lord of Montmorenci.

This splendid Gaston Phœbus, who anticipated in his small dominions the state of Louis XIV., who loved the song of the menestriers, and the chansons, rondeaux, and virelets of his *clercs*, whose *cheualiers* and *escuyers* filled the halls of the palace of Orthez with talk of love and war, who was "doux et amoureux" to all "dames and demoiselles," the handsomest man of the time, (as Froissart tells us), skilled and bold in war, and

* He wrote a poem (I think it was) to prove that a hunter's life, being an occupied and healthful one, nourished virtuous sentiments, and so led to paradise.

accomplished in the arts of peace, was not in all things above the level of his age; an age in which the noblest sentiments, the most chivalrous actions, were often warped or stained by injustice and cruelty. Witness the murder of the high-minded Pierre Ernaut,* and the death of that poor youth his own son, caused, if not actually perpetrated, by himself. It was this same Phœbus who, when the Black Prince required homage of him for the country of Béarn, replied bravely, "Le pays de Béarn est si frãche terre, qu'il n'en doit hommage à nul seigneur du monde."

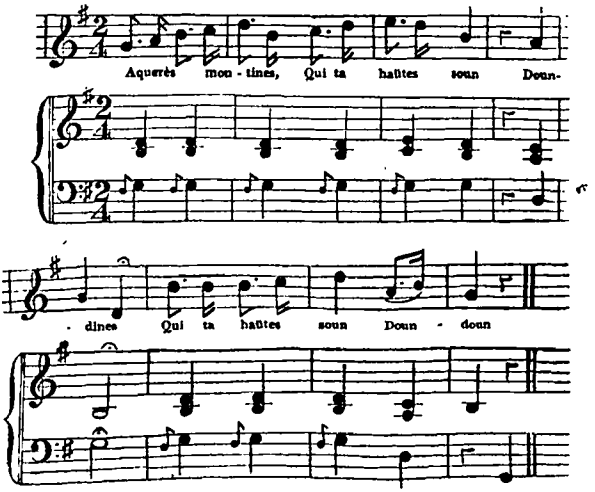
But of wolves we, in this season, hear nothing, and even of bears but little; the izard is the common game. It is the same animal (so say the sportsmen) as the chamois of the Alps, but here of a smaller growth. We called on one yesterday, a pet nursed in a hunter's cottage; it was not at home, but three huge heath-cocks, scientifically stuffed, were. There was a glass-case, too, full of dead game; among which the white partridge,—that pretty bird that loses its brown colour when the snow comes, as if nature would assist it to

* See page 257.

elude the sportsman by blending its hue with the universal one of the earth,—made a very graceful appearance, and helped, with the aid of a row of sage and treacherous-looking owls, to pass off the disappointment.

In the human countenance, the indications of wisdom are usually thoughtfulness, elevation, and serenity; but in the physiognomy of the owl, the contradictory expressions of wisdom and wickedness are curiously combined. Nothing so designing as the grave stare, or lazy wink of an owl; and yet there is great reflection, experience, insight, an almost human concentration of thought, and even (or I fancy it) power of deduction, in his countenance. If an owl could be compelled, by spell or incantation, to give his advice sincerely, it would be, I am convinced, inestimable; but I would not give a straw for his friendship.

I have talked a great deal about Gaston Phœbus as the handsomest man of his age; a most valorous captain, a magnificent prince, a hunter, a poet, and—as the best and bravest sometimes were in that rough period—a cruel enemy. A ballad, of which both the words and the music

are ascribed to him, and whose simple and antique melody was no doubt often breathed from lady's lip in the costly chambers of Orthez, is still sung in the cabins of Béarn. There is something tender and dolesome in the air, which suits not only the meaning of the words, but their mere sound; it has a mountain character, original and belonging to the past, the long ago. I should have taken it for the song of the shepherd, not of a prince: its deep, dull, well-a-day burden is to me full of expression, and of the softest kind.

The translation is a literal one, with which a friend has obliged me.

Aquerès mountines	Ces montagnes
Qui ta haütes soun,	Qui si hautes sont,
Doundines,	Doundines,
Qui ta haütes soun,	Qui si hautes sont,
Doundoun.	Doundoun.
M'empechen de bede	M'empechent de voir
Mas amous oun soun,	Mes amours où sont,
Doundinè,	Doundine,
Mas amous oun soun,	Mes amours où sont,
Doundoun.	Doundoun.
Si sabi las bede	Si je savois les voir
Ou las rencountra,	Ou les rencontrer,
Doundinè,	Doundine,
Ou las rencountra,	Ou les rencontrer,
Dounda.	Dounda.
Passen laygietta	Je passerai l'eau
Chens poü dem nega,	Sans peur de me noyer,
Doundinè,	Doundine,
Chens poü dem nega,	Sans peur de me noyer,
Dounda.	Dounda.

How much does the beauty of a word depend on its associations! Father, mother, are thick words, that would have small charm in their naked sound; yet what reverence, tenderness, and

beauty, do we find in them! Child, too, might be harsh, but for the thought that softens it into something sweet and sacred. At this moment, an infant in the street calls to its mother with such a fond, long-drawn, and protection-claiming *ma-man*, that a volume on the subject of mother love and infant reliance could not say more.

A-propos to words. Shakspeare has melted down old words and recoined them with new images, effacing their original inscriptions when it pleases him to stamp them with another; and that, perhaps, of a meaning altogether opposite to the original one. The word *flutter* belongs to a fan, or to any other light thing easily agitated,—a girl's heart, a bird's wing: "when he asked me to dance, I was all in a flutter,"—"little bird with fluttering wing,"—"Narcissa fluttered her fan," &c. But when Caius Marcius *flutters* the Volscians in Corioli, the sense of the word seems changed, and it becomes associated, against its nature, with images of exceeding vigour and boldness.

The French have many words of happy, but untranslateable significance, which we beg leave to borrow from them; and we have some which are

unborrowable. *Rejoice,* is one: what a word that is! "Rejoice, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" Does it not go down to the very depths of the heart? and do not all its sleeping echoes wake up and answer joyfully? I said so once to a very clever and poetical-minded man,—a Frenchman, but who knew English; but he did not feel its glory, it did not come to him with the bright and kindling sound with which it rings on the familiar ear; to him it was a mere word, with no other meaning than its literal one. I tried to force it down, but it would not do,—word and spirit were both utterly unexplainable. How unjust we are often to translators, and with what unappreciating nonchalance we say—"he only translated it;" Coleridge only translated Wallenstein!

CHAPTER XVI.

CAUTERETZ, CONTINUED — SPANIARDS — THEIR STAGE EFFECT—CAUTERETZ — ITS SHOW POINTS AND REAL BEAUTIES—THE MONNE—GRANGE DE LA REINE—EVENING IN THE MOUNTAINS—PARISIAN TROUBADOURS—THE MULETEER AND THE MOUNTAIN SHEPHERD—TRAVELLED MEN—VANITY VERY LIKE PHILOSOPHY.

We are continually put in mind here of our vicinity to Spain, by the sight of the Spanish peasants who stand about idly in our *Place*, with their dry little wives, as shrivelled as winter apples, knitting beside them. Their dress consists of a coloured handkerchief tied round the head, with the large Arragonian hat, slightly turned up all round, thrown over it in a careless way that might become better visages; a scarlet sash binding the waist, a vest without sleeves, and stockings without feet, kept tight by a strap that passes under the sole of the sandal. This last article (called *spartille*) is made of hempen cord flattened; it just takes in the top of the toe, and forming a very

low socket for the heel, leaves the rest of the foot, to which it is attached by strings tied over the instep, entirely bare. This is the fair-weather equipment; but should the day be cold, they lay a sort of plaided blanket across the chest; and letting the ends fall over the shoulders and hang down behind, contrive to give to this simple drapery considerable stage effect.

Notwithstanding their dirt and ugliness, these men have something very remarkable about them: their non-conformance with the fashion of trousers, the knee garter, tight stocking, spartille bound and fastened with light blue tape, broad hat, and draped blanket, give them, at a favourable distance, a complete identity with the Don Cæsars and Don Pedros of the old comedies. Their bearing is usually grand and disengaged, their movements free, and even vaunting. At this moment, a man treads and re-treads a space of a dozen paces opposite to my window, who looks as if he called Gonsalvo de Cordova his ancestor; his bold step, sometimes springy, sometimes lounging, has nothing of the peasant trot in it; and though rags and patches, tangled locks and unwashed face, may,

when this dramatic-figure is approached, disenchant the imagination, yet, details effaced, the effect is admirable.

Cauteretz has beauty about it, and romance, and wildness; it has grandeur too, but not perhaps of that high-toned and powerful character which might qualify it for especial eminence in a country so proudly featured as the Pyrenees. But I speak only of the scenery immediately surrounding the village, which may be called cheerfully majestic, and commands from its heights, and even middle points, some charming views. Of these, the most remarkable is from the summit of the Monné, which is usually ascended at night to catch the first burst of the sun, when the coup d'œil is said to be magnificent. The next show point is the Grange de la Reine, a much lower station, and at the opposite side of the valley. The ascent, through woods of low beech and up the steep sides of meadows, whose velvet green disqualifies both pen and pencil, is sometimes uncomfortably abrupt, but always beautiful. The last pinch is what passers-by might perhaps call perpendicular, and moreover is carpeted with slippery turf, without

any path or mark of previous footstep; yet my chairmen preferred it to a track lower down, which seemed to me rail-road work in comparison: so up they went *cabrant* on the sides of their feet, (there being no hold for the sole,) with an agility and steadiness not to be believed on hear-say; and festooning their way with the providential security of a drunken man, who reels to the very edge of a precipice, but rarely over it.

The Grange de la Reine takes its name from a visit paid to it by the ex-queen of Holland, (Hortense,) who paused long upon its beauty; so did we, long and delightedly. Before us rose the lofty Monné and its tall compeers, with the dark gorge of Cauteretz lengthening to the right, and the open valley of Argelez appearing in a light as soft as day-break beyond it; while to the left the bold Pic de Peygara showed off proudly in an advantageous twilight. Looking against it as darkness falls, its fine pyramidal form seems to detach itself more firmly, its base to spread, its woods to blacken and grow more massive; while the green enclosures beneath, fed by streams and dotted with peaceful habitations, the quiet grange, the mel-

low thatch, seen dimly through the low trees, still keep some colouring of light on their brighter surface.

I know of nothing so beautiful as the shut of evening in the mountain gorges, when the deepening twilight falls like the shadow of an angel's wing upon the landscape, and the light of day still lies, as if upon another world, on the distant opening, as hope does on the threshold of the heart, though darkness may be in its inner chambers. But when is the hour in which the lights of heaven are not beautiful? Even the dreary or the angry ones have beauty in them to the eye that seeks it,—a sullen beauty, perhaps a fearful one; but how lifted above all common-place impressions are those which the soul receives from its contemplation.

I think I should dearly love to be transported now and then on a warm cloud to the top of some high mountain at the setting of the sun, or under the pale circle of the moon, to see the golden eye close, and hear the chimes of heaven; or at the early day-break, when the young light seems to lift up the darkness that hangs heavily upon it; but as it is, I am bound to the valleys, and there are

many sweet bits and corners here that reconcile one to an humbler level, such as the bank on which we now repose listening to the rough waters, woods running upwards from the eye, ledges projecting towards it, and the mountain rents making wild vistas that, as the day lightens or the evening falls upon them, assume various and mystical aspects; shadowing out a land that one might imagine traversed by other hunters than the brown berrêts who clamber up after the bears: though the last, perhaps, become it best, and are more native to the rude mountains than the plumed spectres of the gallant knights,—Counts of Bigorre and chieftains of Béarn, who still fight and hunt in song and story over the dark Pyrenees. Yet only in song and story, for their material presence has vanished with the châteaux and the chatelains, to make way for the *métairie* and the red capulet.

But besides its poetry, there is a general air of cheerfulness in this quiet spot, and a character of repose in this same cheerfulness, that has something very homely and heart-warming in it,—at least to my fancy. For those whose fancies are, and ought to be, less sobered down than mine

there are enjoyments of another kind, not only one, but two *Cercles;* and gay people go to both, to play at cards, and stimulate a waltz, if possible; but hitherto with little success. Sometimes a solitary couple start off, but if unfollowed, soon sit down again, as if ashamed of having set a useless example; but the season is yet in its infancy, and the shoals, which we hear with regret are expected from Paris, are not yet even on the road. The present visitors are chiefly families from Toulouse, Bordeaux, and other nearer towns: among those from the last-named place, is a young lady, a dilletante nightingale of marvellous song, who when the society of the *Cercle* is strictly limited to her own intimate acquaintance, does sometimes

> - - - - "take the soul,
> And lap it in elysium."

There is no attempt at a theatre, as yet no gallant cavalcades. Paris to the rowel of the spur, or the cut of the *amazone*——Of those, perhaps, hereafter; but sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.

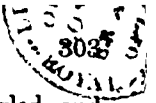
Once upon a time, a troop of sentimentalists from the capital, who wished to astonish the wood gods and make a sensation among their goat-footed divinities, arrayed themselves like opera

troubadours, and bent their steps towards the Lac de Gaube. The fauns, startled at the approach of such unusual visitors, and nettled at the intrusion, petitioned Pan; who, applying his syrinx to his lips, blew through it so lustily, that he soon piped in the stray clouds that had gone pleasuring over the hills; and, having himself some other sport in view, handed over the mountebank minstrels to their correction,—praying them, as a mark of friendship to an ancient neighbour, who had never condescended to marble floors, or slept under other canopy than a skyey one, to rid his haunts of such fantastic visitors. The clouds consented; and suddenly opening their sluices, down came the rain, soaking the light vest of taffeta and the elastic slipper through and through; and the professors of the *gaie science*, who, with their *dames de haute parage* and *joyeuses damoyselles*, had left Cauteretz with flying colours, in the innocent intention of chaunting *sirventes*, or dialogue-ing *tensons*, for the merrie people of the woods, sneaked back again like half-drowned rats, cured probably of the desire to seek notoriety in the forests.

I have just been told of Spaniards who walk abroad here at night dressed, like Figaro, in vests

of silk, with tasselled nets and silver-tagged knee strings; handsome, too, as "the black-eyed boy," who, his long chapter of vicissitudes over, consumes the fag-end of his life in the Avenue de Neuilly. But I presume them to be masqueraders; for certainly the squalid specimens (already mentioned) who submit their pretensions to day-light scrutiny, are, however effective their far off air may be, as unlike the supple, silken, and mercurial Figaro, as the humble priest who passes at this moment is to Schiller's Grand Inquisitor.

But these scrubby folks are the poor shepherds of the mountains; who, however poetically their name and calling may sound when set to Lydian measure, are in most countries a weather-beaten, broken-down race, afflicted with the chronic maladies which the sudden changes and extremes of season heap upon those who are exposed to their baneful influences. It is in the fertile plains or fat valleys that one must look for the sleek and robust figures, models of suppleness and vigour, whom we hear and read of. The Spanish muleteers are said to be a fine race. I saw a sample at Pau, with a fringed instep and a slashed knee, and so hung about with aigulets and other gaude-



ries, that at a distance I thought he jingled, and could have almost fancied that he had as many bells upon him as his mule. But theirs is a joyous, careless, varying life, and as they are always smugglers as well as muleteers, has something in it of excitement and adventure that keeps the spirits alive, and works healthfully on the body through the medium of the mind. The accidents of such a life, and its enjoyments, entirely unclouded by any qualm of conscience,—for it is the custom-house officer, not the smuggler, who is here considered as the robber,—endear it to those who adventure in its course. If they are pinched to-day, their sacks and wine-skins may be replenished to-morrow; if the morning rain wets them through, they can generally reckon on good drying ground at night: often journeying in bands, always in movement, their versatile life forms a striking contrast to the melancholy monotony of a pastoral existence. After a hazardous or toilsome course, the luxury of rest, of welcome,—perhaps of home, awaits them. Or if their hearth be distant, the warm greetings of a familiar host, the snug shelter of an habitual corner where their

coming is looked for, their return expected; a bench by the bright fire of the humble inn, a seat by the smoking olio, kept for the well-known customer whose periodical visits seldom fail, almost supply its place.

But the poor shepherd—the real one—has no such comfortable compensations: wrapped in his cloak of sheep-skin, he watches his flock on the high mountains; and, cut off for many months from all communication with home or friend, paces away his hours on the solitary heath, employed perhaps in knitting the coarse stockings meant to constitute his winter provision. His days are passed in the solitude of the wild, his nights in the solitude of his hut; he eats his cake of maize, and swallows his draught of milk in silence, and lies down to rest without a living soul near him to whom he can say "God bless you!". Even the sabbath-bell, that tolls in all within its sound to the general act of pious acknowledgment, has no voice in the desert; and the prayer which we are taught to hope will be accepted when two or three are gathered together in the name of God, must be pronounced alone.

The travelling-made-easy of the present day, has been a greater leveller than the spelling-book: the conscription made travellers even of the most home-bred rustics. A peasant was formerly a man, like Moab, who had "settled on his lees, and had not been emptied from vessel to vessel; therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent was not changed:" but of late years this simple singleness of mind has been in most places disturbed, and in many overturned by the influence of circumstances. My chairmen, and all my particular friends amongst the goatherds, &c.—those over forty, at least—talk, some of Leipzig, others of Moscow, others again of Cairo, as if they were Auch or Agen; which towns, or nearer ones, would have themselves been formerly called foreign parts. Half of these men have been

- - - - - "to Walachie,
To Prussia and to Tartarie,
To Alexandrie and Turkie,"

and though oftenest simple of speech, yet they sometimes show off a little of the conceitedness of travelled folks. This evening, a beautiful one, as I sat on a dry stone Lalla Rookh-ing it, with my

sure-footed bearers stretched on the turf near me telling stories, (tales of the bivouac, all tobacco and brandy; not a thought in them of maize or millet, or the goat's milk of the mountains,) one, a greater parleyer than the rest, and who, according to his own account, had fought under all skies, regretted his "*education manquée.*"—"With my talents (he added) and advantages, if I had learned to read and write, I should have done great things." I thought *mes talents* was pronounced with an emphasis of satisfaction that outweighed the regret; perhaps he was not displeased to have an excuse for not being (though forty-eight) either prince or minister; it was said, with an air of conviction, that he might probably have been one or the other but for the omission of the Dilworth, or whatever may be equivalent to it hereabouts. For screwing up the spirits to the true concert pitch, there are few things like vanity; I do not mean that morbid and craving vanity which engenders envy and all other evil things, but the good-humoured vanity that can not be affronted, and by the bare help of which I have seen people make themselves perfectly happy, without possessing a single one of those ingredients

—facility excepted—which are usually considered as essential to happiness.

But though the hope of advancement, on literary grounds, had gone out of my chairman's heart in as far as he was himself concerned, yet it was only to settle itself a little farther off; and I respected him for the sentiment, and the hearty honest warmth with which it was expressed. His children (he said) should have the helps that he had wanted; he had a *demoiselle** of ten years old, who wrote like a clerk; and "a tender juvenal, a most acute juvenal" of eight, who would be fit some time or another to fill the place of "Mister muster-master general," or any thing else, clerical or laical, that might fall in his way. The past he knew was irremediable; but throwing his own personality into that of his children, he rubbed his hands and started for the future with a vigour that will die game, and might give many a lesson in its onward journey.

* The higher classes of French always say, *ma fille, ma femme;* which familiar appellations the humbler ones convert into *demoiselle* and *épouse*, as being loftier perhaps.

CHAPTER XVII.

CAUTERETZ, CONTINUED — HAWKERS, LITERARY AND OTHERWISE— BOOKS OF THE DAY—ABUSE OF TALENT —THE SEASON OPENED—THE EASY TOILETTE—CLIMATE—MUSIC AND ITS ILLUSIONS—THE VIOLIN—ALL THAT MAY BE DONE WITH IT—THE POETRY OF NAMES — COMPENSATIONS — SUPERSTITION — ITS COMFORTS AND ITS DANGERS—LONG LIVE THE FAIRIES.

THIS morning, as I sat reverie-ing in my corner, with a book which I dearly love open before me, in walked a hawker from Barèges; and before I was aware of her presence, had opened a bale as large as the lord chancellor's woolsack, and was already in the act of arranging her shawls on the backs of the chairs, with the borders skilfully put together so as to look brighter and broader than they really were. There are but few shops here, and those few meanly and meagrely furnished, but a perpetual traffic is carried on by pedlars from Barèges, Bayonne, Toulouse, &c., who hawk their wares

from house to house; and as the entrance door is never closed, walk up stairs, and let themselves in without ceremony.

Yesterday, a pedlar paraded his pack with a Corneille, a Molière, a Pascal, and a Montesquieu in it, but found no sale. The established classics of French literature are like old stock-plays—still on the list, though cobwebbed for want of handling; for who will read the one or *assist* at the other, when the annals of the guillotine, or of the crimes that lead to it, are published every day and acted every night for their edification;—all wreathed, too, and decorated, like the veiled skeleton at the Egyptian feast, with flowers whose very brightness has death in it. To offer such homely food to minds accustomed to violent excitement, would be like setting a household loaf—suppose it even of the best wheaten flour—before one who had been living on cayenne broils and mulagatawnee, and expect that he would feast upon it.

For myself, I must say, that my palate being but indifferently paved, I never could reconcile it to such stimulating food; nor do I ever stumble on one of those records of misused powers without

feeling something deeper even than regret. If, in a reading country the great spring by which the passions are excited the judgment influenced, the character strengthened or perverted, and that bias given to the mind which decides its future action, be the press,—and who can doubt it?—what a national calamity must such a literature as its present one be to France!—a literature that revels in the anatomy of vice, and whose inspiration is a Bacchante that rushes on with blood-shot eyes and hideous songs, in which vice-inciting words are set to deadly music; a literature which makes the necessity of emotion (*le besoin d'être ému*) a paramount and habitual feeling, and indisposes the mind for the reception of any impressions but those which, neglecting its higher faculties, its interior powers, address themselves to its weaknesses through the medium of the senses.

But the bane will no doubt produce the antidote; and this livid literature, the offspring of hardihood and a demoralized imagination rather than of genius, but in which there is usually enough of the latter to make us lament its perversion, and sometimes a melancholy exuberance

whose very splendour shocks, will, in all likelihood and before long, die a natural death. Whenever morals are grossly outraged, there is, sooner or later, but infallibly, a re-action, general, severe, and decisive; for the moral feeling, however it may be drugged into temporary apathy, is never extinct in a great population; and works that have no other end but that of creating artificial excitement, which neither stand upon the base of usefulness or of moral beauty, which treat religion as a political invention and virtue as an expedient, beating down all holy feelings, all consoling hopes, all beautiful reliances, by the broad diction of vice, cannot long retain their influence. Their very excitement must in the end produce the languor of satiety, as their uniform colouring and tendence must at length efface the character of individuality.

The host of successful imitators germinated by the popularity of certain great writers in this way, proves how much more easy it is to duplicate exaggeration, than to approach the simplicity of nature. There are few writers who have dabbled in the present style of representative ro-

mance, who cannot work up a horror or dramatize a crime, if not with the power of their masters, at least currently. Factitious feeling, like the nose of a mask, offers its tempting protuberance to all who are inclined to seize it; and depravity put into action, presents immense facilities to those who are not ashamed to speculate on the evil propensities of man; who, appealing to his worst feelings and worst passions, dare to open the scent of vice, and setting vacillating minds upon it, have the callous courage to rejoice at seeing them intoxicated by its vapour. But that men of genius should abuse the great trust by whose investiture they have been made mighty above their fellows, and forget the awful responsibility which their high prerogative imposes, is more than melancholy. So is the whole system, the motives, the results, the works themselves; which, impious, gloomy, and offensive as they may be, unjust to human nature and discouraging to virtue, are less repelling even in their hard deformity, than in the ghastly levity, the atrocious libertinism mixed up with it.

July 28th. Within a few days we have made a flying leap from tranquillity to bustle. Arrivals

are frequent, so of course are new faces; balls warm into vigour, beauties are announced, and the sweet stillness, the country quiet of this pretty little place, is threatened, or more than threatened, with invasion. Already the two *Cercles* are at daggers drawn, and every spring set in motion by each of the rival proprietors to propel the crowd in the direction of his own particular interest. One *Cercle* being quite enough for the place, the crowd cry out with Macheath, "How happy could I be with either;" but less *nonchalant* than that renowned commander, instead of finishing with a 'tol de rol,' go to both.

One of the principal charms of these cheerful and unceremonious coteries, is the easy toilette; perhaps the early hours may be another. There is great good sense in not exhausting an amusement; chaperons keep their eyes open, and young ladies keep their roses,—so soon lost in the vapour-bath atmosphere of a jammed ball-room, where the indefatigables, who regularly wait for the dregs of an entertainment, look, at the end of the season, as if they had cheated Charon of his fare, or were indulging in a game of snap-dragon.

Strangers who come here unknown, and wish to make acquaintances, are authorized by the received code of politeness to send their cards to those who have arrived before them; which form, usually gone through, sanctions a bow, and if the parties are so disposed, opens the way to a future acquaintance. Reserved persons who do not understand this custom, are shy of complying with it, lest it should involve them in any disagreeable consequences; though none whatever are to be apprehended, as no acquaintance follows unless it be mutually desired: but people have a kind of knowledge of each other, which is thought to give a family air to the evening meetings very favourable to cheerfulness.

I have spoken of the easy toilette, but without meaning to insinuate that the modest cloak of pepper and salt, drugget, and subdued black dress of the English ramblers in Switzerland, is ever encountered here. The wanderers in that "hempen, homespun country," I mean as far as fashions are concerned, are usually birds of passage on the wing for another land, and who, having Italy in perspective, do not unpack; but preserving their

Paris *modes* inviolate for the coteries of Rome or Naples, equip themselves sturdily for mountain work, and think of nothing more, when the first dinner bell-rings, than ablutions, smooth hair, and a little fresh frilling. But here people come prepared for something of society, though on a limited scale; and as the Pyrenees are the aim and end of their journey, and lead to nothing, the imperials are unpacked, and their elegant, though in general very simple contents (for in France the dress is always in keeping with the place) spread abroad, to the dismay of those who reckoned on running out in the dear little apron.

Besides, the visitors here are almost entirely French, who, like some abigail of romance that I have read of,—it may be the renowned Mrs. Honour herself, though I will not vouch for it,—never travel without their sweet clothes; while in Switzerland they are principally English, hard-working labourers, some with the love of nature in their hearts and the deep feeling of its most marvellous beauty; others with a spirit of enterprise that is, in its way, enthusiasm; all fearless of chances, and prepared for rough marches in the

fitful weather incident to a Swiss climate. Here we have fair-weather skies and fashions,—fashions calculated on the reputation of the skies, and skies meriting all the fine things that can be said of them. It is true, that the example of a single summer cannot be fairly taken as a criterion of climate, any more than a pretty face as a voucher for the charms of its neighbour; both may be fallible tests, and yet we are apt to put our faith in such credentials. I remember once remarking the beauty of a girl who kept a stall close to the gate of a town, and happened to be the first person that we saw on entering it. "She is nothing, (said a person to whom I pointed her out,) you will see hundreds here that are handsomer." I thought myself among the houries, but never saw another pretty face while I remained in their paradise.

Perhaps this is not a case in point, and that the present delicious weather, instead of being like my girl at the gate, a false sample, may be the usual settled fine of the Pyreneean mountains, (for the plains have another climate and a more ardent one); if so, it is perfect: sun, air, and sky, even in their kindest moments, cannot do better.

As we loitered along this evening, returning slowly from our twilight ramble, our troubadours of the inn were making eloquent music for the good pleasure of a listening maiden, who looked down upon them from her balcony. It was a charming air—the one they played, with a sweet touch of sorrow in it, and beautifully did they bring it out from their stringed instruments, with skill enough to give effect to feeling, and feeling sufficient to keep skill, at least its mechanism, out of mind. If they had been hidden in a wood, and I the only living listener, I might have fancied their music the symphonies of angels, growing into sweeter strength as the entire silence of night fell upon them. But the robust mistress of the band, her long-haired child, (of canister memory,) and two male companions, literally and physically street fiddlers, with the unshorn Hebrew look which especially belongs to that fraternity, were full in view,—so no room for illusions.

These performers are from the old minstrel land, and to their violins Cauteretz owes all its music: I have never heard other sound either of voice or instrument. The old painters loved to place a violin in the hands of their angels, and

though the engine may be of quaint form, and unfitted by familiar associations to figure in a celestial choir, whose organ of praise should be (it would seem) the ready one of seraphic song, yet, as it was in the taste of the age to express the worship of angels by the intervention of human ingenuity, a better choice could not have been made than of this instrument; for there is none through whose sound—fluent and voice-like—the song of praise, or the deep ravishment of absorbed and tremulous adoration, could have found a freer, purer, or more congenial medium, except it were in the glorious burst, the upswelling hallelujah, or the prolonged vibrations of the organ.

I greatly love the violin, that is in skilful hands, and have often, as the cunning bow stole upwards, drawing out a fine continuous tone till it reached the highest clef of sound, fancied that its silvery wailing might be like the voice of a fallen, but contrite spirit. If it were necessary to justify my taste in instruments, which it is not, so many are of the same fancy, I might be tempted to say pithy and convincing things to those who confound the fiddle with the violin; or to those who, having only heard the scrape of the former, or danced to

it, know little of what the *violin* is capable of producing, or of the high discourse which the instrument of home fun or ball-room gaiety can hold with our thoughts, feelings, passions, when skilfully awakened. The violin player and the fiddler profess the same art, and exercise it with the same (mechanical) implements; so do Wordsworth and the illustrious rhymer who turns out limping couplets, and "serves the quality" with elegies or epithalamiums, and the rustic lover with doggrel, at all prices, from "whatever your honour pleases," down to the humbler pennyworth.

The eldest sons of the earth, as some one calls the great mountains, become the expressive appellations which distinguish them here,—as La Maladetta, (the accursed mountain); the Poey Mourou, (black peak); Mont Perdu, (lost mountain); Traou Malet,* (mauvais trou); Campana del Val, (bell of the valley, and the same that will toll on the day of judgment), &c. The lakes and torrents, too, have had their romantic baptisms,—as the Coumbe Scure, (lake of the dark hill); Riou Mou, (bad stream); le Pas de l'Ours, (the pass of the bear), and many others; some chris-

* Tourmalet.

tened in the patois of the country, others familiarized to the stranger's ear through the less energetic medium of the modern tongue. The poetical feeling to which the streams and mountains of the Pyrenees owe their characteristic denominations, appears to be the heritage of rude minds. We often find fine or modern names grafted on the simple and expressive ones by which the remarkable features of a country are known in the dialect of the peasants, but they have not their charm or character. The literal meaning, too, of these vernacular names is sometimes so beautiful! What sweet ones are often attached to old lands in Ireland,—as Lisnegar, the fort of sorrow; or Benena, the music of the glen: what a sin it would be to make Rose Hill, or Holly Mount, of them, or even Tivoli, or Laurentinum. I do not know what Cader Idris may mean, nor yet Helvelleyn; but if they be translateable it must, I am sure, be into something wild and grand; both sound so in their untranslated tongue.

Nothing so comfortable as a belief in compensations. I have just now been talking to a woman, who told me wonders of Toulouse, where she had lived formerly; Cauteretz was of course a dull

spot compared with it, but then you were not tempted to put into the lottery: this was the equivalent. The compensation sometimes lies, like truth, at the bottom of the well, and it is not every one who can draw it up; sometimes *cela saute aux yeux*, as the French say. I will not name names, but once upon a time there was a certain man whose father died at the age of *eighty;* the son, a philosopher and scholar, received with dignity the consolations of his friends, and thanking them graciously, added, "C'est un grand malheur, une grande perte; mais, enfin, mon père étoit octogone."* This may be called an eight-sided compensation.

The mountaineers of the Pyrenees are, like all other dwellers in remote places, addicted to superstition, and believers (they say) in all those old credences at which the more instructed laugh. Wise men, I know, consider superstition as a stupid thing, at once the root and flower of ignorance; but I, who am not wise, cannot help thinking that it is sometimes a garment to the poor, a sort of Providence that hangs berries on the dry bushes that tangle in their path, covering their briery

* *i. e.* Octogénaire.

scantiness with a little show of colouring. Besides, it is a belief, and that is in itself a blessing; those who acknowledge supernatural agency, will also acknowledge a directing power.

Black superstition I should, however, bar out; though I well know the delight,—vague, fearful, dark, but still delight,—which this excitement produces; and how the dullest mind answers to the touch, as the sleepy horse does to the stroke of the whip; at once finding unknown or forgotten energies, and revelling in their exercise. But shutting the door against these sable gentlemen, I would leave the key-hole open for the fairies, (greatly respected here,) and for other superstitions of a pious and gentle nature, which I often think are the grains of salt that give pungency to a brown-bread existence. Some, too, are so beautiful! all those that belong to the Virgin have such a blush of freshness on them, something so household and congenial to the innocent heart, that it would be a pity to rob the glens and mountains of the shrines which perpetuate so sweet a worship. The voices which are heard praying in the desert, the angels that in the guise of benighted wanderers knock at the herdsman's hut,

and, if they find him of good faith, bestow their blessing on him; the holy well in the wilderness, the shrine in the hollow of the rock, are dreams that I would leave with the devout souls who find comfort in them; neither would I disturb their faith in the rude effigies of that sacred symbol, which all Christian eyes behold with reverence.

But on superstition that takes its colouring from the spreading circle of monastic gloom, whose base is terror, and object mental degradation or enthralment, I would have no mercy. It has nothing in common with the tender and consoling superstitions of the mountains, with the legends of the shepherd's hut, or the evening visions of the desert, except the demand which it makes on the necessary stock of credulity.

My view of the subject is not, perhaps, a very philosophical one. I should probably make a bad reformer; for, with a sincere desire to see the light of truth breaking in upon the gloom of ignorance and bigotry, to see religion entering into the heart instead of merely exciting the fancy, based on the pure and beautiful foundation of the gospel instead of on the inventions of man, and looking up to heaven with humble confidence instead of

making over its dearest interests to foreign agency; yet for the gentle superstitions already spoken of, I feel a tenderness of which I cannot divest myself. I would disarm the nursery faith of its terrors, but keep its poetry, its cheering dreams, and consoling presages; I would keep, too, its fairy tales, for I doat on them; and for their dear and honoured sakes who are therein shrined, would reform with a pair of scissors, not a scythe; and when condemned for mal-administration, go out of the world crying "Long live Poucet and his seven brothers! long live the desert fairy, the yellow dwarf, and the renowned Ricquet à la Houpe!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

EXCURSION TO THE CHATEAU DESPOURRINS—THE MASON'S EYE AND THE POET'S—THE MOUNTAIN MINSTREL—CLOTILDE—THE PARADISE OF ST. SAVIN—THE ABBEY CHURCH—QUEEN MARGARET'S VISIT—MONKS AND MAIDS OF HONOUR—MONASTIC IDLENESS—THE SAINT—FLIES AND FLOWERS—THE HOLY MAN—RETURN TO CAUTERETZ—WANTS—BEAUTY—A WATERING-PLACE CONSCIENCE.

THE sweet sun and soft shadows of yesterday, tempted us to make an excursion to the abbey of St. Savin, in the bright valley of Argelez. There is but one carriage-road from Cauteretz, the same gorge of which I have already spoken; and beautiful it looked to-day, especially where the hills recede, as if to let the eye fall at once on the clear and rapid river, the sunlit valley beyond, the peaked mountains, and the village of Pierrefitte looking white and cool in the midst of its dark trees and green savannahs. It is a sparkling picture full of living freshness, and succeeds to the more scowling scenery of the gorge as Lady ——'s

smile does to the lour of her eye-brows, all the more effective for the contrast.

Having passed Pierrefitte, we left the carriage and the high road, and while the more effective members of the family party took to their feet, I inserted myself in a chair, and humbly imitating the rajah's wives, set off with my bearers. We dispensed with elephants and Lalla Rookh curtains, but not altogether with pretensions; for the men, sensible perhaps that matters looked somewhat rickety, swelled out about a new chair to be set up next season, in all the elegance of which hoops and tarpaulin are susceptible. In the mean time, on we went (steadying the rickets as well as we could) along shaded paths and fresh meadows, till we arrived at a dismantled house of an agreeable elevation, raised on a charming terrace, but with scarcely a whole pane of glass in the windows; hay, straw, boards, all put in requisition, and clubbing their capabilities to keep out the weather. In short, a genuine Castle Rackrent, with an old Thady and a young one, two half-starved cats and a turbulent mastiff, who would have eaten us all up, I believe, but for an intimate friend of his, who bullied him into tranquillity.

This is the Château Despourrins, (or Miramont, as it is also called,) and a charming thing it might be made, if its proprietor were able or willing (for either will or power seems wanting) to rescue it from the state of dilapidation into which it seems fast falling. The terrace, or rather the view from it, is delightful; and no one being at home but the Thadys and the cats, we begged leave to dine upon it, with the beautiful valley of Argelez unrolled before us, the road within buzzing distance, the mountains farther off; beneath, a hamlet with its church and rustic belfry; and, sheltering us at one side, a round green hill, with a fine sweep of wood from top to bottom, close and fresh as if cherished for some sacred purpose. On a low mountain, which detaches itself from a more elevated range at the opposite side of the valley, are the ruins of the Château de Beaucan, an ancient castle of the Rohan Rocheforts, which strangers usually visit. According to my chairmen, (whose beat does not lie that way,) there is nothing to be seen but an old wall. Perhaps in this old wall La Martine, had he turned his steps that way, might have found an elegy, or Béranger a thought with a profound moral in it; but my chairmen tried it by

the rules of masonry, and having no mental eyes, never once saw the high device of the Rohans over the crumbling portal, which more gifted ones would have discovered under a century's growth of ivy. I do not pretend to gifts, but I read it even from my distance, that proud motto,

"Roi ne peut, Prince ne veut, Rohan je suis."

It broke on the air like the neighing of a war-horse, or the sound of a trumpet.

Before we quitted Despourrins, I had thoroughly repaired the house, (and by the same process which had helped me to read the motto,) thrown out balconies, filled them with flowers, placed marble vases full of southern plants on the terrace parapet, trained the beautiful Spanish honeysuckle over the walls, and made the dwelling worthy of the scene it overlooks. I think, too, that I displaced here and there a corn-field to make way for a green slope, and turned out some herds of cattle to graze upon the meadows.

The owner of this neglected capability, is the son, or grandson, of the poet Despourrins, the minstrel of the Pyrenees, whose ballads are sung in every mountain-hut when the long nights of winter come, and the log burns on the hearth, and

the gossips of the hamlet roast chestnuts in the ashes, and spin out flax and stories while the candle lasts. He himself used (as the younger Thady informed us) to sing his romances in the woods at night; but the present man is no poet, and the nightingales are again in full possession.

These romances are, it is said, full of feeling, tenderness, and beauty; they are in the patois of the country,—a language prolific in expressions of sorrow, anger, love, joy, and all that poetry borrows of emotion. It is probably the same *gascon* of which Montaigne (speaking of the mountain patois) calls "un gascon singulièrement beau, sec, bref, signifiant:" and again, "nerveux, puissant, et pertinent;" but easily subduing the brief energy and male beauty for which he seems most to admire it, to the expression of the tenderest shades of sentiment. I know nothing of it but its sound, which comes to my ear as something like the delicious (and much more intelligible) old French of that sweet Clotilde de Surville,* fondest of wives

* Marguerite Eléonore Clotilde de Vallon Chalys, born 1405, and married at fifteen to the Chevalier Beranger de Surville. She was the daughter of the gallant Ferdinand de Vallon and the beautiful Pulchérie de Fay Collan, his wife. This charming poetess was herself the type of the

and most tender of poetesses, and this is spell enough for me. I know that critics, who love to destroy illusions, give a more modern date to the domestic and loving records which bear her name; but I would not, for the onyx on the finger of the Zoilus, were it rarer even than the turquoise (rich gift of the maiden Leah to her Hebrew *bachelor*) which the "most sweet Jew" and graceless child stole from her father,* deprive myself of the pleasant belief that they are hers. To whom else could they belong but to the innocent and fond wife, who, sitting by the cradle of her new-born child in her absent husband's castle, sends sweet speech and passionate notices to the liege lord and love of her young heart, the idol of her beautiful fancy? Who, but the tender mother, could have imagined those almost infantine, yet exquisitely maternal *Verselets à mon Premier Né*, beginning

"O cher enfantelet, vray pourtraict de ton pere!
Dors sur le seyn que ta bouche a pressé!
Dors petitot, eloz, amy, sur le seyn de ta mere,
Tiens doulx œillet par le somme oppressé!"

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vraie chatelaine, the high-minded woman and faithful wife of the fifteenth century; her birth-place was a château on the banks of the Ardeches in the Bas Vivarais, and it is said, that she never quitted her native province.

* Vide *Merchant of Venice*.

No one, I am sure;—and so will all say who have read the *poesies* of this charming *trouveresse.*

Between Despourrins and the abbey of St. Savin is the chapel of La Pietà, lifted up on the palm of a hill, and with a view, that makes water-colours of the poet's terrace. O it is lovely! I could look at it till I had dreamt my heart into its beauty, and forgotten that I was there myself looking at it. The habitual sky of pale silver blue above; below, the valley of peacefulness and beauty,—the scooped hills with hamlets half-buried in their woods, invisible but for their glistening roofs of purple slate and white chimneys; and the mountains with the velvet brown, the heathy purple brown, shading their broad pastures. How many stray blessings lie in our path, when a lovely day sends us out among such scenes as these,—how many thoughts written in sunbeams,—how much present gladness, or quiet reflection, deep and still, yet finding its way heavenwards, and loosening the cares of the heart as it does so!

But the crown-imperial, in the way of views, is from the abbey itself, or rather, from the garden attached to it. How beautiful it is! and in the best style of Italian colouring, like one of those

rich old pictures that nourish the fancy while they delight the eye. The côteaux of Argelez are, perhaps, more beautiful seen from the Pietà; but the look along the valley into the mountains is here almost matchless: all the magic of aëreal tinting and warmth of vegetation which belong to southern countries brighten on it, and give it a character distinctly different from the more sublime, but less warmly developed scenery of Switzerland. I left my chair behind me in the village, and my companions tied their mules to the convent door; and then we passed on to the terrace, and looked down from its embowered seat upon the trelised vines, whose tender and gracefully indented leaves form a carpet of living verdure beneath the eye, and on the revel land of loveliness that lay before us; the white chapel of the Pietà standing out on its beautiful hill, with the woods below, and the blue heaven above it; the warm vapour colouring the mountains with unimaginable hues, and the mountains themselves lengthening off into shadow, as if they would bury their radiance in repose.

And here again I could have sat hour after hour delightedly, on the garden wall in the shade of the old abbey church, looking above and below, and

forward over the open loveliness of the valley, into the mysterious majesty of the mountains. The spot itself is as dry as a bundle of hay, scarcely a green leaf or the semblance of a flower, except a ragged jasmine trodden down by the careless feet kindly admitted within its enclosure, and a few straggling roses,—sweet roses! that live and bloom every where, and, as if by the force of their own beautiful will, in spite of all contingencies. But better than pinks and gillyflowers, or even than orange trees and oleanders, is the parapet on which we sat or leaned, wishing to stay there till night-fall, the landscape was so beautiful, and the still-ness—the distant country stillness, so soothing! But we had four leagues, with two huge hills in the midst of them, to repass: so we drew a long breath before our good by; then turned back again and drew another; sat down, got up, and at last—off; but with great and increasing reluctance. While dwelling on such a scene, an ineffable sense of happiness is communicated to the mind; anxiety is suspended; restlessness, bodily and mental, appeased; the spirit calmed while raised; and the heart content with itself, as if it reposed upon the memory of a good deed.

The word abbey—a fine grey word, and in itself a chronicle,—had led me into an error. I had expected ruins on a beautiful site, such a one as those monastic pearl-pickers, the Cistercians, and indeed monks in general, knew so well how to select; and here was no disappointment, for the spot is a rare one, and worthy of their preference; but St. Savin's abbey* exists no longer, at least in its monachal form. An old church, with a fine exterior colouring, a carved porch of ancient workmanship, and some bits of sculpture in the walls, still remain. Within the church are some curious pictures portraying the life, and death, and miracles of the saint, who is there interred under a sort of gilt baby-house; and an organ—or the skeleton of one—as old, I should think, as the date of the canonized himself, with a row of heads rudely carved at the bottom, that still contrive to wag their jaws, and shut their eyes, with a fine marrow-bone-and-cleaver rattle, when the instrument (if such it may be called) is touched; two clatter and wag as if they had only been just set going for the first time, but the third grows rigid and refractory.

There are no cloisters now, but the capitals of

* Originally founded by Charlemagne.

some small columns, which probably belonged to them, decorate the garden wall. The monks and their pillars were unsettled together by the free burghers of the old revolution, who righted rights after their own gay, careless, *coupe-gorge* fashion; and the blank, though still somewhat convent-looking house which now represents the monastery, (or may be, perhaps, its very self modernised, for we can find no one capable of informing us on the subject,) offers few mind-helping images—exteriorly at least, and we had no *billet d'entrée;* so that we must shut our eyes to see that busy night when Margaret of Navarre and her scattered train found shelter and hospitality within its walls. The same Marguerite

> "Qui des tendres amourettes
> Des moines et des nonettes
> A fait un recueil malm;"

but a very good woman, too, notwithstanding her heptameron.

The court had been water-drinking at Cauteretz, (or Caudres, as it was then called,) till they were surprised by an October deluge. Down came the rain, filling the houses, destroying the roads, swelling the torrents, which in their turn carried away

the bridges, and overflowed the country. Queen, court, and all were turned adrift: some got off through the mountains to Arragon, Roussillion, and Navarre; others, who had escaped in the same way, took shipping at Barcelona for Marseilles, while the less lucky ones tried cross-roads, and losing their way, fell among robbers, or were devoured by bears. But the queen and her exclusives paddled, or swam, or waded—for we are not told which,—to the abbey of St. Savin; where, in the naïve phrase of an extant letter of Margaret's, the abbot "logea des dames et des demoiselles dans son appartement. Il leur fournit de bons chevaux de Lavedan, de bonnes capes de Béarn, force vivres pour arriver à notre dame de Sarrance," &c.

How the fire blazed that night in the arched refectory! and how the maids of honour giggled, and wrung the night-dew out of their fair tresses, or their dark ones, and bewildered the poor monks, whose Ash-Wednesday visages must have cut a grim figure near the gay Shrovetide faces of the court damsels! Perhaps there were some of Father Philip's innocents among them, who thought such geese no bad birds; and others within whose bosoms shadows of the long gone-by may have been

called up with painful and dangerous fidelity, by the sudden apparition of such guests. Boccaccio or Chaucer would have made a merry, or perhaps a woful tale out of the adventures of that night, and called it by some quaint name,—as the Mayde's Legende, or the Monk's Stryfe, or Madam Margaret's Pilgrimage; indeed, an imagination that is neither Chaucer's or Boccaccio's might make picture out of the queen's visit, coming like a benighted Esther, with her train of dripping maids to crave hospitality of the holy abbot, knocking with royal prerogative at the gates, and then bending to receive his blessing before she passed through them.

In all positions idleness is the stagnant pool of the mind, whose fat waters generate corrupt vegetation; but the idleness of a monastic life is much more likely to be prolific of evil, than the idleness of the world. The last is a free-will profession, adopted voluntarily by minds suited to it, and commonly taking a sociable or a meddling turn,—sure, usually, at the long run to tire others, and often ending in the horrors of lassitude; but exempt from the solitary and—for its possessor—dangerous character which it assumes when forced

upon an ardent, brooding, or passionate nature. Who can tell what melancholy mischief the chance visit of the courtly company may have worked among the brothers of the order, if any of such mould were cribbed within the abbey walls on that memorable evening?

The benedictine monk, St. Savin, had gone to burn his eternal candle in another world centuries before "la Marguerite des Marguerites" halted within its walls. He was a pattern of sanctity, and professor of miracles; and carried a candle always about him, which was instantly lighted by being placed in his bosom, and though it appeared to burn like other candles, never was consumed.

But though I talk thus lightly—perhaps irreverently, of the holy Savin, yet he was an anchoret of the old *pâte*. Noble by birth, being the son of a count of Poitou in the time when counts were sovereigns, Spaniard by country, being a native of Barcelona; pious as the fathers of the desert, he came to his solitude, resigning the honours of his race, subduing the ardour of his southern blood, and, with the same courageous indifference to all worldly indulgences which St. Jerome carried with him to his Syrian desert, built himself a

cabin in the wilderness, and died in the odour of sanctity in his Thebaid.

Quitting the church, every form and variety of *goître* pressed round us. The air of the village, which, such as it is, boasts a Roman origin, is (owing perhaps to its arcades and a certain ruinous look) perfectly Italian; so are the vines, flinging about their garlands from branch to branch in the sweet vagabond, and I believe useless, Italian way; for good wine, or rather its parent fruit, needs a prop, though according to Rosalind no bush. We did not return by the same path which we had followed in going to St. Savin, but descending by a more rapid one, looked down through an open wood on some abrupt slopes, now in their after-grass beauty; and dropping into the road a short way below Pierrefitte, sat down beside a clear pool, and amused ourselves, while we waited for our carriage, with the gambols of that pretty fly, the *demoiselle*—indeed of myriads of them, as they hung upon the broad green leaves that grew about, or in it; admiring their dark wings—thin and shining like a sort of old-fashioned crackling gauze, of which I forget the name; watching their light and elegant movements; blowing shepherd's

clocks; and making field nosegays; poor sports, some may think, but not I for one, who love them nearly as well as when I used to run out in a storm of rain, crossing slippery fields, and brooks too when they came in my way, to gather double violets or jonquils, with an inverted geranium-pot on my head to keep the rain off, being a greatly preferable thing (I used to think) to a bonnet. Our posies, which were beautiful, soon withered; and we were obliged, after having nursed them up in cool leaves, to throw them away. In the fields, flowers grow wild and lavishly, but rarely long outlive the gathering; in a garden, care, skill, and cherishing, with a good soil—even sometimes with a meagre one,—puts sap into their stalks, and gives strength, brightness, and permanency to their beauty: but the hot-house forces them into a sickly maturity, which being artificially produced, loses at once its freshness, and dies worthlessly if removed to a natural atmosphere,—in all which there is a moral, that I leave to others to find out.

As we drove along homewards, admiring the black pines, and fine-drawn peaks of a wild spot in the gorge of Cauteretz, we observed a man bare-headed and with naked feet, kneeling before a rock

and praying devoutly. The figure, taken with the scene and hour, was striking; and perhaps we might have grown poetical about it, if a sturdy urchin, jackal to the anchoret, had not jumped over the fence, and setting up the true canting whine of a regular country beggar, enlightened us as to the length, breadth, and depth, of the holy man's piety. This devout display was of course meant to gull the simple folk who were returning homewards from the market of Argelez, one with a purchase of goats, another with a refractory pig, or a calf thrown across his shoulders, and a third with an osier cage full of chickens, with a skittish girl (sometimes a pair of them) belonging to each party, hanging loose amongst the more occupied members, and seeming to think it doing quite enough to bring herself home in safety. After the beautiful stillness of St. Savin, our *angle* seemed like Piccadilly, or the Boulevards, quite a town-confusion of sounds and press of carriages,—five country coaches, and a twenty-inside sort of omnibus waggon, through all which our double phaeton (hired for the occasion) steered its way with difficulty.

Monday. As I looked at the mountains to-day

and thought of Spain, I fancied that I should like to peep again into Don Quixote: so sent for it to the library, but it was not on the list; neither was Gil Blas, nor the Bachelor, nor Hurtado or Quevedo, or any thing else that treated of Spanish life or manners. Nothing was read (according to the shopwoman) but "L'Echaffaud," and that was engaged ten deep.

A very general want in small company-places* is a good and *appropriate* circulating-library. A few indifferent novels usually constitute the groundwork of the stock, pulled up by "Nôtre Dame de Paris," or "La Peau de Chagrin;" perhaps "Ourika," or "Cinq Mars," or Walter Scott—the general bark draught and purifier of all circulating libraries abroad as at home. One is quite as sure of finding him spread out at full length between the Duchesse d'Abrantes and Zimmerman—the usual alpha and omega of a French country catalogue, as between "Abbey," (of Grasville,) and "Zofloya, or the Moor," our customary head and tail pieces.

* I will not say here particularly, for the catalogue is more solid than usual, only one can never get the books named in it.

After the want of books,—which to me, who love them almost as dearly as Chaucer's Oxford scholar did, is no small privation,—comes the want of a piano. There is not even a spinet to be hired here, and those who wish to exercise voice or finger, must ask leave to do so (when there is a chance of finding the room unoccupied) at the *Cercle;* where they are probably no sooner seated, than two or three anxious faces, peeping in at the door, take care to let them know that they are intruders, and that an arranged card party, impatient of delay, find the

> - - - - - - "bout
> Of linked sweetness,"

far too "long drawn out" for their pleasure, or patience either.

Here are no table d'hôtes, as in Switzerland and Germany,—at least none of any note: dinners are furnished by traiteurs, (of whom there are several) at a moderate price, and of proportionate quality. From three in the afternoon till seven in the evening, young girls shoot by in all directions, poising on their heads the enormous basket, where four and four, or six and six, are duly arranged with strict attention to numerical exact-

ness, and somewhat less to the filling up. Two celebrated beauties are among the number of these breathing Caryatides; one bold and lavish, with a free bright eye and animated movement; the other so retiring, that it is difficult to get even a glimpse of her fine Greek profile. In the class immediately above that of the labouring peasant, there is a great deal of beauty scattered about in the south of France; but the downright country women are in general tanned and ill-featured. I have seen, however, some handsome exceptions, particularly in the Landes, and have been told that at Marseilles, and other parts of the south that approach or border on the Mediterranean, fine heads, and shapes to match them, are the common growth of the country.

But the soil of Cauteretz grows coarser stuff; no handsome faces visible, and few even comely ones among the peasant girls who throng in here on holidays. The men are a finer race; but all are remarkable for an air of peculiar decency, and for being much better and more comfortably clad, than persons in their class of life usually are; their dark brown berrêts are generally in good condition, and their strong cloth

jackets and trousers of the same colour, sound and unpatched. The women wear close gowns, also of brown cloth, with scarlet capulets, laid on at the edge with black; to which, on dressy days, they add large white neck-handkerchiefs; and when stiffened up in their best gear, look precisely like the figures on the ancient monuments set upright. The close, grave robe, down to the ground, the quaint capulet framing in the face between two straight lines that terminate abruptly below the waist, falling back and disclosing the arms beneath muffled almost to the fingers' ends, are all of the true tomb-stone character; and if the face be spare, and the eyelid long and heavy, make the exact chatelaine of the gothic sepulchre.

The moral atmosphere of a watering-place is rarely, if ever, of the purest; and one is not surprised to find a little—and I believe it is but very little—town-corruption in the valley of Cauteretz. In one shape, however, it does appear, and prominently; the spirit of higgling has an existence and consistency decidedly indicative of the mineral-spring conscience, which always has the short season before its eyes, serving at once as temptation and excuse. The younkers who hawk about nose-

gays and plates of wood strawberries, are as finished extortioners as the most accomplished ones of the capital. A little girl comes to me every other evening, opens the door without a preliminary knock, steals in noiselessly, being barefooted; and when my happy tribe are gone farther off on a ramble than my feet can carry me, and that I think myself alone, is often standing at my table, with the scarlet capulet thrown back from a soft pretty face and her basket extended towards me, for a moment or two before her gentle *hem!* attracts my attention. She usually brings four small nosegays, each consisting of a rose and a few gay-looking weeds, for which she asks about as much as a Parisian would pay for a ball bouquet; yet it cannot be said that she means to impose, for instead of beginning with an exorbitant demand, and, when refused, dropping down to another, which, though so much lower than the first as to sound (by comparison) like a bargain, is still enormous, she sticks with the courage of a martyr to her first price—probably the one fixed on by her mother; nor can any thing subdue her quiet obstinacy, or change the inveterate *non, non,* which is all that she has learned to express in

regular French. Considering the quality of her wares, and the facility with which trefoil, and meadow-sweet, and buttercups are gathered here, her demand is a dishonest one; but there is a show of integrity in her stubbornness that carries off the extortion. After all, perhaps a casuist in morals would say, that where a choice is allowed there can be no extortion, and condemn the word altogether.

A milliner at Paris once said to a lady when I was present, "I do not affect to sell bargains, or to content myself with small profits, but I never change my prices: these, as well as the goods, are before you; you have the free liberty of option, and a certainty that there is no *particular* imposition intended, as the prices are never altered: it is for you to buy or not, as you please." One could not call this tricking, and yet the intention was certainly to get more for the merchandise than in strict probity ought to have been asked.

CHAPTER XIX.

A STORM, AND ITS EFFECT ON THE MIND—LE SAINT SUAIRE AND ITS VIRTUES—EXCURSION TO LAC DE GAUBE—OPENING OF THE VALLEY OF MARCADAU—MARVELLOUS CHAIRMEN—SPANISH FANCIES—MY ROCKING-HORSE—A PAUSE AT THE CERISET—DREAMS INTERRUPTED—THE CERISET—PONT D'ESPAGNE—VALLEY OF THE LAC DE GAUBE—CHARACTER OF ITS SCENERY—RETURN AT EVENING—DANCING CHILDREN—FINE GOLD AND HARDER METAL.

THE other day I quarrelled with a thunder-storm for its muffled tone and small artillery; but last night we had such a wiping off of scores,—such a hurtling in the heavens! lightning sheeting the earth with its blue glare and streaming in at the unshuttered windows, while the loud thunder came booming from the distance with a deep forward roll, like a mighty vessel labouring through the clouds and throwing off its tremendous broadsides; and then the last unearthly sound,—the retreating one,—dying with slow rebound along the hills until it was lost in fearful silence, quickly and

suddenly broken by a fresh uproar, more awfully near, or more solemnly distant than the former.

What plenitude of power is in a storm! with what a voice it cries aloud in the wilderness, compassing the earth in its mighty sweep, and mocking the strength and violence of man! When the stars that keep nightly watch in the firmament seem extinguished, and the blue dome into whose fields of light the timid imagination fears not to adventure, feeling that nothing but joy, and love, and praise, can dwell in such a heaven, is transformed into a tossed and shapeless desert, the heart sinks,—seeing in its lurid darkness images that it had not dared to think of, and hearing in its deadly and portentous sounds the same voice, that when the condemned to everlasting punishment inquire what hour of the night it is,—as if the passage of time could allay their torments,—answers, "Eternity!"*

Such storms as that of last night are not heard, even in countries subject to their visitations, without some feeling of alarm, though familiarity strips danger of many of its terrors; but the unknown

* This fine and fearful image was presented by a Christian missionary to the minds of his Indian followers.

voice, the unfathomable power, never entirely loses its hold on the mind. Science may prove that the shock and the flash are the effects of natural and explicable causes; but in the volume of the mind is a page on which the might and majesty of the omnipotent hand, that impels the storm and sends it reeling through the heavens, are written in everlasting characters, in defiance of the demonstrations of chemistry. "It is the Lord that commandeth the waters, it is the glorious God that maketh the thunder."

Calm again to-day, and soft as a Cuyp, but not sunny, and (being sabbath) the Basque handkerchief, flat and floating, the broad Arragonian hat, the berrêt of Bigorre, the capulet and capuchon, madrass of Gascony, and Paris bonnet, are all afloat, and the bellowing tempest quite forgotten in the re-assuring light of day. There is no rubber-out like daylight; wild dreams, wild fears, dark thoughts and evil ones,—doubts, presages, all are effaced by the application of a sunbeam, and not, like the traces of a heavy pencil, doubtfully, but fairly obliterated, and the blank surface restored to its original whiteness.

Among the many groupes scattered about, is

one composed of an old blind man, his wife, and a little boy, who have been chaunting litanies from door to door since seven in the morning. I have just made a penny purchase of one of their books of marvels, a rare morsel, in which a firm belief in the efficacy of the *Saint Suaire* (the holy winding-sheet) is earnestly inculcated as the special means of salvation; and a hundred days' indulgence promised by Pope Clement VIII., whose word is not a whit the less valid for his being dead upwards of two hundred years, to all such as carry about with them the precious pennyworth. Seven Pater Nosters and seven Ave Marias, repeated seven times in honour of the holy grave-cloth, procure for the suppliant the power of delivering, at each separate repetition, five souls out of purgatory, to be chosen "à volonté" among such of his or her deceased friends* as may be supposed entitled to a place in the region of expiatory punishment. Three orisons follow, simply and rather gracefully composed; these it appears were found in the holy sepulchre itself, and the assurance of their sacred origin is given like a naked truth, without any superfluous allegation, nothing to weaken the

* "Cinq ames de ses amis."

force of internal evidence. The royal town of Besançon glorifies in this precious relic: twice every year it is exhibited to the faithful, when those who are possessed with demons find (if they be also believers) no difficulty in getting rid of their turbulent inmates.

The canticles which follow, are all recitals of miracles performed by the power of the *Saint Suaire*; and legend-loving children will find amongst them the story of their old friend the Christian soldier, attacked near to the city of Belgrade by four Pagan robbers; who, perceiving that he still lived, and even appeared unhurt, though pierced through and through like a cullender, became, as well they might, converted on the spot, and remained ever after firm believers in the miraculous virtues of the blessed winding-sheet, a shred of which the invulnerable soldier always carried about with him. The sale of this little book is immense: every capulet, without exception, lays down her penny; even the brown berrêts (especially the old ones) are active purchasers; and open mouths, gaping like the beaks of hungry birds, stretch and stiffen under the galvanic influence of astonishment.

To this emotion of wonder succeeds (generally speaking) the sentiment of perfect conviction,—and here lies the danger. If the peasant believes that, by merely possessing this little book, and gabbling over a certain number of prayers in a certain given time, he can gain a hundred day's indulgence for individual sin, and a sort of omnipotence over the hereafter of his friends into the bargain, his trust in the mercy of God and the benefit of redemption becomes superfluous, and a good life a work of supererogation. There is no bridle upon sin, for even if you should die in the midst of it, your surviving friends can at any time buy you out of your difficulties; it is but a penny and ten minutes' mumbling, and you are cleared for paradise. A comfortable sop for folks of an easy swallow; but for those whose mental subjection is still incomplete, and whose reason rejects such childish fatuity, the very knowledge of such a faith is a push towards scepticism. Many a man has fallen into unbelief, because he could not command credulity; I mean many an uninstructed one, for the action of enlightened reason reinstates belief, should it have tottered, by the effort with which it combats ignorance.

Tuesday. The morning opened so deliciously, with a soft air (not *le vent d' Espagne,* as the shepherds call the hot wind that comes over the mountains) and a sky full of golden promises, that we felt ourselves beckoned to the Lac de Gaube in a way too sweet and winning to be resisted. This lake is the regular lion of the valley of Cauteretz, and I believe the show lake of the Pyrenees, which are deficient in that fine relief to mountain scenery. Our cavalcade consisted of four chairs, and sixteen chairmen, each chair being provided with a relay of bearers. The males of our party, disdaining to be *boxed up,* went on horseback as far as they could; but it was only a snatch of luxury, for the path soon became impracticable even for our mountain horses. A little beyond the baths of the Ralliére, the road to the Pont d'Espagne* turns to the right; and the mountains, drawing nearer to each other, compress the valley into a gorge, which opens strikingly with a fine clustering of peaks. Two torrents, tearing down from the right and left, boil over beds of granite; and having made sundry rough noisy falls, unite nearly at its entrance, and form the Gave,

* At the Pont d' Espagne commences the valley of Marcadau, which leads to the Spanish mineral baths of Penticouze.

which flows through the valley of Cauteretz. For some time the road winds round and round the mountain sides, overhanging the torrent or descending to its roar; then climbing up again into the region of silence, seems to fly, not only from the noise of man, but from the stir of nature. As far as the last baths, and for some way farther, the road is tolerably good; but soon after they are passed, it continues fading away from road to track, till its line is almost effaced amidst the rocky fragments that are strewed about every where.*

How the chairmen manage to make their way, Providence, who seems to have bestowed on them the step and instinct of the izard, best knows. Like that animal, they can balance themselves on the point of a precipice; spring from one loose stone to another, which appears to preserve its equilibrium only by the transient pressure of the foot; run up perfectly smooth, and all but perpendicular rocks, and down again with such rapidity, that to sit steadily in the chair requires the *aplomb* of a Dutch burgomaster; pick their way through

* The road is now greatly improved, and accessible for horses as far as the Pont d'Espagne, even to the lake, for the very bold. (1836).

granite fragments with the sagacity of an Andalusian mule; poise their slight machine and its lading on the edge of a precipice; hoist it in the air over rocks,—and all this without jerk or stumble. Nothing, indeed, can be more agreeable or less fatiguing than the movement; and the wonderful activity and steadiness with which one is borne along, gives immediate confidence even to the most timid.

Fine combinations of rock, fantastic in form but always grand; fore-ground of pines rich and dark, with an underwood of glistening beech. Ascended through groves of pine, noble ones, to the cascade of the Ceriset: its first rush is bright and feathery, and its arrowy flight through a chasm in the vertical rocks whips up the fancy, and runs away with it just as Don Gayferos did with the fair and faithful Melisandra; which comparison may appear far fetched to those who have not the kingdom of Arragon at the other side of the mountain, but to those who have, comes as naturally as good day.

For my own part, I have done nothing since I came here but run over, mentally, all the snatches of Spanish story, all the recollections of Spanish story-tellers, with which a memory indifferently furnished, and more hearsay than reading, have sup-

plied me. If I have not talked, it is not because I have not thought of them, but rather that I feel the necessity of reining in my fancy; and instead of unwisely essaying a prance from Ruy Diez to the 'Great Captain,' or a jerk from Lopez to Yriarte, contenting myself with a quiet see-saw on my rocking-horse (which after all is but a wooden one) without thinking, like the knight of La Mancha, that it is flying through the air; while others, whose eyes are not bandaged, can see that it merely tilts up and down on the the same narrow stripe of earth; but as to flying,—"not a jot, not a jot."

It is the Ceriset that flies along all the time, not me; and with that faithless constancy, still vanishing yet present, which in brooks and floods is only a moral lesson, though in a human being we might call it deceit, and talk of false surfaces and under currents. There is something of exceeding loneliness in the noise of a waterfall; it does not startle like the cry of the wild bird in the wilderness; it is not angry or prophetic like its accusing or mournful scream; some, even, might call its burst gay, (I speak of waterfalls, not cataracts); but to me there is in its sullen music a constant grieving

sound, which, according with its solitary course, makes harmony with the forests and the rocks, and with the heart too. I love these voices of the desert,—the bird, the flood, the wind in the holes of the rocks, and seldom hear them without feeling my mind carried back to scriptural images in their grand and desolate beauty, or their grave and continuous sweetness.

At this moment an iris, the most visionary object which nature offers to the sight, throws its vague splendour over the Ceriset; and from the spot on which I sit inditing—not good matter, but first impressions, the freshest always if not the truest,—not a movement of life is visible, not a sound heard but the rush of the waters, and the crackling of the insect people hard at work in the grass, the most summerish of all summer noises. All but myself have run down the hill to look at the first boil-over of the torrent; and I have taken a patch of dry moss for my seat, and have just discovered that when we feel most, we do not think, and that I have been sitting for the last ten minutes with my eyes in the forest, plunged over head and ears in one of those delicious reveries that has not the fraction of a thought in it.

I had just got so far, and shaking myself out of my reverie, was still sitting on my bank, fancying that such scenes as I then looked upon might, with the help of a little Juan Fernandez vegetation, have surrounded the cabin of Robinson Crusoe, and thinking of the foot-print in the sand, that fine and fearful incident to which genius has given a solitary power, more awful in its singleness than the war-whoop of an army of cannibals, when up came a party of grumbling Toulousains, who soon set me on my feet again, and drove me out of my Indian solitude. Being alone when they came down upon me, I felt awkward, and moved off to a little distance, but could not put myself out of hearing of the stentorian voice of a speculating moralist, who contrived to make his elaborate praises of nature's works, and of their beautiful uses, end—I forget how—in the anticipation of fresh trout *délicieusement savourée*, which appeared to await the party at the Lac de Gaube.

The graceful Ceriset put out all other falls till we came to the Pont d'Espagne, which gives its name to the valley, though many sparkle through the dark pines in the interval,—as the Cascade des Boussés, le Pas de l'Ours, &c.; one of which (I

think it is the Boussés) is very sweetly placed in the middle of a low and rocky amphitheatre covered with pines. Granite without its accompanying desolation, patches of bright and flowery turf, soft beech trees, and an abundant carpeting of rhododendron; innumerable rills fresh and clear, that, bursting from the crevices in the rocks, fall in soft showers on the turf; while the Gave, in its quiet moments, ripples round little green patches, that look as if they had been blown off the sides of the mountains, and dropped into the current with their roots downwards.

The cascades in this valley are not cataracts,—a huge word, which belongs to Niagara and others of those great river-falls, where the flood misses footing and tumbles down in its whole breadth and bulk from hill to valley. But the fall of the Pont d'Espagne is bright and lonely,—splendid, perhaps, after the first melting of the snows; but at present the upper part wants water, and the precipitous stream seems (at its first leap) to cling too closely to the surface of the rock over which it descends. It is a sylvan fall, that looks as if it had slipped over the rocks on its way from a forest pilgrimage; full of picture, and happy in its sweet

accompaniments of shade and solitude, and in a sort of undressed wildness not too strongly marked for its power and character, which an austere and overbearing nature would have effaced, but enough for beauty and dignity. Its great charm is a certain presence of solitude, which almost tempts one to fancy it a discovery; its fault, perhaps, the being seen too much in bits,—full, rushing, sparkling bits; but one does not know where to look for the whole.

Higher up than the Pont d'Espagne the pine is master. We ascended through a noiseless forest amidst fine still trees, some erect and stately, others prostrate as the storm had left them, or suspended like rude bridges across the pathway, or opening to make room for a patch of sunny turf, covered with innumerable flowers. Some of the trees were hung over with a white, fleecy moss, probably the growth of many winters, that falls from the points of the branches in long flakes Descending to the lake, it becomes wild and dreamy as a Highland superstition. The Vignemale,* fur-

* The Vignemale is the highest mountain of the French Pyrenees; the Maladetta—the loftiest of the whole chain—being, as well as the Mont Perdu, on the Spanish side.

rowed with glaciers, closes the gorge; and though still at a considerable distance, appears to rise from the very borders of the Lac de Gaube,—itself a mountain lake of wild and melancholy aspect; still, and pure, and blue, as if it never had been rippled by net or oar, or stirred by wind. A fisherman's hut, on a gentle swell of green land, and a fairy lawn at the southern end with a few trees upon it, alone break the precipitous lines that descend from the tops of the mountains, and hide themselves in the waters. In some places there is no room even for a foot-path, nor sign of life any where but on the spot before the hut. No oar glimmers on the bosom of the lake, no bird flies over it, no summer leaf rustles on its bare shore; and yet, notwithstanding the cold glaciers, and the bleak mountains, and the poverty of vegetation, it is a gentle, rather than a savage scene: the influence of a southern climate is sensibly felt; it is visible in the colouring of the air, in the lights that fall upon the water. In Switzerland, this little lake would be called a pool, or perhaps passed over entirely; but here, where lakes have been almost forgotten, it has slid into celebrity.

A flat boat, something between a canoe and a

box, is drawn up into a creek, and an old man sits mending his nets beside it. The figure is of a piece with the scene; but two saucy-looking women who stand at the door of the hut, inviting us to taste the trout of the lake, which they are said to dress in perfection and to charge for exorbitantly, spoil it a little,—but only a little; for we turn our backs upon them, and have found out a green hillock of our own, where we sit musingly, or in pleasant company with each other's thoughts, looking into the deep waters, and up to the darkening mountains, and listening to the little bursts or heaves of sound that are not song, or speech, or step; but which, in the deepest solitude of the forest or the glen, break in upon the general silence of nature.

As we returned homewards through the pine woods, we stopped to look back upon the quiet lake: it was in shadow, and evening had already dropped upon its mountains; while a valley opening from the west crossed them, with a line of light that had a whole day of sunshine in it. The contrast was exquisite, so were the lights and shadows that fell upon the pines; the ground was covered with wild pinks and other flowers, and the air

full of sweetness. There were no birds: as evening came I missed their whistle, the sweet Ave Maria of the desert; brakes and bushes to build and warble in abound, but they have no tenants.

There is something inexpressibly solemn in the stillness of a wood at the close of day; and the pine tree, which has no light leaves to tremble as the breeze passes over it, and whose stationary darkness doubles that of evening, has something visionary in its gloom that works magically on the fancy. The air, the light, the shadows that pass over the face of the heavens, seem subject to some secret and mystical influence: it speaks in the passing wind, it descends from the mountains with the last beams of the setting sun.

From the baths, where the world turns round and leaves the silent valley to its solitude, to the fisherman's hut on the banks of the lake, there is not a single habitation; not even a shed in which a shepherd could find shelter. To this utter absence of the indications of life it is that this valley owes the character of absolute loneliness which constitutes (I think) its most especial charm; it looks like a glen in some uninhabited island of the Pacific Ocean, exceeding green and sweet, but

which had never heard the mariner's song, or been visited by the sail of the stranger.

There was a time, before my thoughts, my feelings, my entire being was shared with others, when to have passed the evening hours alone in this wild valley would have been to me entire delight. In my youth I loved few things so dearly as a solitary walk in a still grove, or along a moonlit avenue; how my thoughts moved forward with my steps, how my steps tarried with my thoughts; how they flew along with the clouds, or reposed in the still moonshine! The sky awakened, the trees sheltered them; the flowers that covered the earth, the brooks that moistened it, the bird that sang on the briar, caused a gentle excitement, a soft stirring in the fancy,—pure as virtue, beneficent as repose. It is all present to me at this moment, and the tender and deep feeling with which I then enjoyed such things is present with them.

It is three hours' walk, or rather trot, according to the chairmen's step, from Cauteretz to the lake; and two hours and a half to return. Our cavalcade entered the village gaily, and found a circle formed round two dancing children, one of whom had prodigious vigour, and the other more beauty

than I have seen for many a day,—quite a dream of a creature, so delicately put together, all of fine gold, and with a soft, easy, half shy, half confident grace, and a look of birth, which—if not rubbed out by vulgar contact before she grows up to girlhood, will provoke many a fanciful conjecture. Poor thing! it was sad to see so pretty and so helpless a being in training for such a trade; but childhood is not prescient, and she had a happy careless air, as if her dancing-dog life was one of joy and indulgence. It gave me pleasure to hear that the man who fiddled for these children was their father, and to see that a decent-looking woman made one of the troop, and caressed the living flower as if she really was her mother,—not her kidnapper. The elder, too, came in for her full share of encouragement, and, her professional talent being evidently the most promising, had considerably more spangles on her petticoat than the beauty; who, while her sister cut fours with surprising agility, tottered on her little feet, made false steps, and looked so graceful, and so excessively happy while she did so, that one could not help fancying, that with more talent she would have had less charm.

CHAPTER XX.

POLITICS AT CAUTERETZ—PATRIOTS, REAL AND IMAGINARY—HIDDEN TREASURES—A WAY TO GET AT THEM—THE GHOST SEER—THE CHASE—DAY-BREAK NOISES—THE CRY OF THE HOUNDS—MUSIC AND PAINTING COMPARED—THE TAMBOURIN AND THE BALLADE OF BIGORRE—IDLENESS WITHOUT VICE—THE BALLOON.

As every niche has its political affair, every glass of water its tempest,* Cauteretz, not to be behind hand with other places, would provoke fate a little; and so at the last ball a few white lilies were stuck round the sconces, and two or three cavaliers wore the same insignia in their button-holes. When lo! pounce came the mayor, chief grocer of the district, and with 'one fell swoop' mowed them all down like Macduff's chickens. Then it was bruited that the opposition party was to make manifest at the old *Cercle*, and that we were likely

* Frederick the Great used to say, that when he heard of the troubles of the Republic of Geneva, he always thought of a tempest in a glass of water.

to have a little political gladiatorship, just a slight show up of fealty to old blood and old usages from the Huons of Bordeaux, and a retort courteous, or otherwise, from the men of the day,—*i. e.* those who consider themselves as going along with the moral, intellectual, and political movement of the times; and who look upon an old dynasty in the same light as an old glove, curious as a memorial, if a great hand has worn it, but otherwise as a thing that has outlived its uses, and may be thrown aside. While the new one, be it of kid, doe, or even bear-skin with the rough side outwards, bag-shaped like a child's frost-glove, curtailed like a mitten, or any thing, in short, except the old regular four-finger and thumb cut, is always pronounced a good fit and a beautiful bit of stitching, unless it chance (as sometimes happens) to burst in the trying on.

But what may have been brewing can never now be known, for the sudden apparition of the préfet dressed in official frowns and *frac*, at once threw terror into the hearts of the ex's and the anti's. I do dot know whether he cried out, "Holloa, masters! what's here to do?" or treated the matter with judicial gravity, but I saw

him doing Jove between the two proprietors of the York and Lancaster *Cercles*, who both looked as if caught in some petty larceny; and thus ended the show of opinion and its diversities, meditated by the adverse parties of Cauteretz.

The present French seem decidedly averse to political repose; peace seems to them like servitude, or at best an acknowledgment of weakness. They resemble the invalid whose irritable nerves forbid all stationary comfort, who cries "turn me on my right side," and is no sooner obeyed than he moans to be turned again upon the left, on which he lies but for a moment when he desires to be placed in an upright position. Besides, they begin already to discover, or imagine, that they have been playing at a round game, in which the stakes are general, but the pool belongs only to one. There are several Carlists here, and a few gentlemen patriots, not many: gentlemen sometimes prefer waiting till the sentiment of patriotism has taken its station; or drop it, when the greasy rogues who call themselves the people start up to act upon *their* principles. Inherent aristocrats are likely, from the circumstances of their education and early impressions, to make unsteady patriots, (tak-

ing the word in its popular sense,) though believing themselves, and often being, very sincere ones. The bold and sublime sound of the word liberty, the present excitement, the always hoped for and sometimes immediate fame, the "loud applause and aves vehement" of the people, enthral ardent natures,—I do not speak of glorious ones,—and flatter such as have been pampered, perhaps goaded, into irritability, and who believing themselves reformers, are only malcontents. The patriot aristocrat of such mould and shaping, is staunch to the general outline; but the details offend his nice susceptibilities, his patrician blood rises up against the too close freedom of the vulgar tribune, and the shabby strong-minded varlets who would go halves with him, soil his imagination by their contact. The most arrogant practical aristocrats are often theoretical liberals: query,—are they likely to be sincere ones? Charles the Tenth used to say, that there were only two men in Europe who had never changed their political opinions,—himself and Lafayette.

It is easy to say, "Let man be free, let all be equal sharers in the open patrimony of freedom;" but when plebeian Jack or Dick starts up at the

call, and rubs his greasy skirts against the delicate doublet of the privileged, then liberalism stiffens into arrogance, and all the indigenous feelings which the vanity of political chieftainship, or the purer sense of political right, has subdued for the time being, work upwards, and re-appear upon the surface. Of the glorious nature, of what it feels, dares, would suffer, for the sake of that,—be it throne or people, which it holds sacred, I say nothing, feeling that the sentiment of reverence lies too deep for words.

This morning, as I returned from the springs, my chairmen overtook some persons who were conversing gravely; and as we kept side by side for some time, I heard, without intending it, all that passed between them. The principal orator was an odd-looking man, decently but rather singularly dressed; he spoke apparently with reference to a portion of earth which he held in his hand, and which he said contained a certain quantity of gold. None knew (he added) the riches of the Pyrenees;* there were streams issuing from their bosom that ran gold, and mines hidden within them of inex-

* Marca quotes Strabo as an authority for the existence of gold mines in the mountains of Labour, and the Basse Navarre.

haustible wealth: to say nothing of the treasures which the Moors had buried in their entrails, and which we daily trod upon without being aware of their neighbourhood.

He was listened to with great attention,—I thought credulity; and his reasoning, yet enthusiastic manner, seemed favourable to quackery, could there have been any inducement to its exercise in this out-of-the-way place. I have seen him pass since, but cannot make out who he is; perhaps a charlatan, perhaps a visionary, yet not singular in his opinion (here at least), though strikingly so in his manner of expressing it. The belief in hidden treasure is (I am told) as general at this side of the Pyrenees as in the kingdom of Grenada itself.

The same belief prevails in Ireland among the people; and many an idler forsakes her wheel to "scratch for the *gould*,"—to use the phrase of a half mad, half cunning woman, whom I once met with in an Irish hut; and who gravely assured me that she was sometimes out with the *good people*, as she called the fairies, for days together, and knew of certain means by which the treasures of the Catholics could be discovered. "But the dark

man is there (she said), sitting upon a stone close by; and if the moon shines upon your pickaxe, the Lord have mercy on your soul! for the first stroke of it will be for your own grave."

To this she added, that it was to her intimacy with the dead that she owed her knowledge of their secrets, and very liberally offered to instruct me in a mode of throwing the head suddenly back; by which movement, accompanied by certain mysterious words, ghosts might be raised at any time. She had spent the night (and she said it boastingly) in the company of the dead; upon which the family of the cabin turned up their eyes with a sorrowful believing look, at once expressive of compassion and awe. One of them, a beautiful Spanish-looking girl, whose eyes shone as if there were lights behind them, told me afterwards, that those who had the mark upon them for ghost-seeing, were bad people who had not come round to the church, and were tormented; their sufferings (she said) were terrible; and added, that the woman had staid all night with them, for they dared not refuse her a shelter; and that she and her people had made a noise like the howling of the last day.*

* Verbatim.

I do not know what people go after here in the shooting way,—nothing I believe that they ever come up with, for I have not seen even a *brochette* since we arrived here;* but a vast deal of business is done among the echoes. When I hear a shot in the distance, I often think of England, and of the cheerful images connected with its autumn scenery. A woman's life in a sporting establishment is not perhaps, at all times, a pleasant one; yet I know few women who have not loved the associations, and felt interested in the hazards of the anxious and exciting chase; who do not remember with a sort of affection the early call at break of day, when the shrill sudden whistle, the preparatory chirp, the stir of leaves, the lowing of cattle, the call of the huntsman, the answer of the hounds—deep-mouthed and musical, and all the mingled sounds from bush, brake, field, and farm-yard, salute the light with their many-tongued "good-morrow;" and while the bees are bustling in the honey-beds, and the mavis and laverock still hymning their pretty matins, are all suddenly effaced by that true chorus of hilarity—the cry of

* The season for bear and izard hunting, is the early spring or autumn.

the hounds. A cry so full of health, cheerfulness, sport impatient to begin, and gay defiance, that no other combination of sounds, however skilfully arranged, can produce the same effect upon the mind.

All out-of-doors enjoyment, every thing that brings us nearer to nature, has charm in it. I can thoroughly comprehend how the chase might become a passion, if it were not for its cruelty,—all *Methodism*, a Di Vernon of nineteen once said to me, and wondered how a reasonable woman could talk such stuff. But, stuff or not, the thought of the poor hunted animal is always a stumbling-block in the way of my sporting propensities.

We have little music here; the peasants do not sing as they work in the fields, nor the women as they sit before their doors at evening: there are no horns in the forest, or wild voices in the glens, at least that I have heard. Even if the pipe of the shepherd be silent, one expects the music of song: song accords so naturally with the feelings, pleasures, and occupations of a country life, that the ear longs for it, and is disappointed at its absence. Did ever pastoral poet fill the mind with such a sweet succession of country images as are awakened by the *rantz des vaches*, when it comes

in the stillness of a summer's evening, floating downwards from the hills, and filling the valleys below with its wild melody? I miss it here; I miss the sad and simple music of the Irish glens, and Highland valleys; I miss the Alp-horn with its day-break sound and mountain associations, and listen—with regret that it should have hitherto been in vain—for the sweet airs of the mountain Pyrenees, of which I had such charming anticipations. They are sung (we are told) at the winter fire-side gatherings: but I do not hear them at the cabin door or in the open field, as I had hoped to do.

No one honours the art of painting more than I do. Few feel more intensely the outdrawing effect of its power on the mind, the memory, and the imagination, its sway over time and space, and the magic skill with which it reproduces, in seemingly unchecked dimensions, all that nature has made of sublime, or fair, or wonderful; embalming, by other and more precious means than the swathes and spices of Egypt, the body—with the mind in it—of all that genius and virtue have made great, or beauty lovely; imaging for each a character of scenery, a period of time, a sphere of action in harmonious consonance with the leading

object, and endowing the whole with the rich and adequate expression which almost becomes movement as art pours life into it. Yet, even with the great debt of individual enjoyment which I owe to painting on my memory, I still feel that music addresses itself more directly, not only to the emotions of the heart, but also to the higher faculties of the mind.

Many, I know, think otherwise, and some have talked of music as fuelling crime; others will have it that the love of music is often found in vicious natures, citing Nero, Charles the Ninth, and Foulques, the terrible bishop of Toulouse—himself a troubadour (and from choice) in early life, as examples. Shakspeare, that great master of the secrets of man's nature, was of a different opinion; so have been other pure and exalted spirits, and many pious ones, who have found comfort in it. Music may sometimes enervate, but how often does it elevate, inspire, console, and soothe the turbulent passions into calm? saddening sometimes, but rather with tender than with bitter sorrow; leading often to acts of heroism or piety, never, I believe, to base or cruel ones. Sad music enters into the soul, bringing thought with it;

bright music fuses thought into fancy, without destroying its power. A true lover of music feels its absence as a loss of nourishment to the deep and fine-toned faculties of the mind; and missing the voice in which man emulates the seraph, or the combination of sounds so subtly blended that the effect seems pure and unelaborate singleness, thanks even the wren for its chirp; but if it be the lark that sings, gives out his soul to be lifted skyward on its melody.

Painting embodies thought, but however sublimely, still by known images: music awakens it, but leaves it to incarnate its own fancies. The altar-piece is Raffaelle's; the majesty of holiness, the sanctity of innocence, the entireness of sacrifice is in it; gloriously designated, but by familiar symbols. The *Miserere* is Allegri's; the soul drinks in its till then unknown harmonies, and for the moment believing them celestial, detaches itself from bondage, and soaring upwards, loses its identity in the fellowship of angels.

In one point, however, painting has an immense superiority. Music has no means of perpetuating material images; of setting before us in actual and almost living freshness the distant land-

scape, the unknown sea, the trackless desert; of bringing us into familiar contact with the illustrious or imaginary dead; and more, of giving back, at least, the effigies of those whom the grave has closed upon. Sweet and precious privilege! worth to the fond and sorrowful heart all the rest put together. Another gigantic advantage; Raffaelle embodied his own conceptions, but Handel is dependent on the executive powers of others, and liable to be disfigured by them.

It so happens that, while I write, the sound of instruments comes from a distance, with the slow approach of a procession. Yesterday a public dinner took place here, in commemoration of the great days of July; and now the chairmen, who have been banqueting in the Parc at the expense of the patriots, are dancing along the street, preceded by the national colours, to the tuneless music of a whistling fife and squeaking fiddle. The fifer holds another instrument (somewhat lyre-shaped) within the affectionate embrace of his left arm; while, with the same hand, he applies the *galoubet* to his lips, striking all the time upon the six-stringed* machine with a small stick which he

* Or four, I am not sure which.

holds in the right, and which produces a weak imperfect sound, inaudible at a small distance. This instrument is the ancient tambourin of Béarn, (the tambour de Basque, which we call tambourine, is not in use here,) and to its faint music the chairmen dance along in most monotonous measure; first following each other one by one, like a regular file of ducks, then turning round with a kind of deliberate whisk, and when solidly arranged, each couple face to face, cutting—what they probably call capers, with a weight of limb and a gravity of deportment in perfect consonance with the sad sameness of their music; while a few disengaged *balladins*, scattered about at intervals, rattle small flags over the heads of their more agile comrades.

This dance is the ancient *ballade* of Bigorre, and, as a national one, the least interesting I have ever seen. The spirited pantomime of the Roussillionais, the expressive bolero, swimming waltz, and clattering mazourka, all speak; so do many others,—the tarantella in Greek poetry, historical as the frescoes of Pompeii, the Highland reel in a pleasant mountain measure, fresh and heathy, and even the Irish jig, though less graceful and

dramatic than the dances of the south, and less buoyant than the merry ones of Scotland, has its own distinctive character; a quality in which the *ballade* is peculiarly deficient. But they are not without Irish qualities here, though they may not be dancing ones; the Bigorrais, like the Irish peasant, "se soult moult tristement;" yet I should not say "se soult," for he does not get drunk, he only *indulges* to mournful measure. Singing (as I have already remarked) is rarely heard; but when it does interrupt talk, it is the true *chronaune* which the genuine Irish howl over their dead, or their beer-cups.

Perhaps the dance, of which I have spoken so lightly, may be of Greek or Phœnician origin; a Bacchic vestige, or a Phrygian mystery, full of classical affinities to an antiquarian, but Hebrew to a modern of my calibre. At all events, it helps to amuse the humbler classes of water-drinkers, who being separated from their habitual occupations, and having nothing to do but to stroll about and knit stockings, run out from all quarters if but a dog barks. I never saw a much idler population, all—not flying,—but sauntering away from themselves, and trying to lose the sense of their own

identity and the burthen of the present hour, in any futility that presents itself. How we fight for and against oblivion! toiling to forget, and labouring not to be forgotten!

And yet idleness, the acknowledged mother of mischief, does not seem to be followed here by any of her brood. Even temptation fails to make rogues; and the open door, freely entered by all the ambulating traders who ply about, from the Toulouse grisette to the capuleted matron, who with her distaff in her apron-string, offers her small bundle of worsteds for sale, leads to no ill results. It would be vain to expect that the primitive simplicity of pastoral life, with its confined horizon of wants and wishes, should be found intact in a frequented watering-place, that receives annually within its bosom its full complement of the straw and chaff which float upon the surface of society. But if the peasant of Bigorre be not now as simple and ungrasping (I mean the peasant in the neighbourhood of the baths) as before his springs were convicted of healing, he has still many excellent qualities. A drunken man is very seldom encountered, a quarrelsome one still more rarely; nor have I heard of any act of violence or aggression,

(things of such common occurrence in rural communities,) or even of the slightest affray, since we have been in the country.

The peasants of the valley of Cauteretz are a quiet people, without any show whatever of gaiety, habitual or occasional, that I have seen. Spanish rather than French in the staidness of their deportment, but French in their love of talking,—such of them at least as are brought together here, and grow sociable. Remarkably less vivacious than their countrymen in general, (who it must however be said, though light of speech, are far more serious than we give them credit for being,) still talk is balm to them—here as elsewhere; and the constant stream of tongues, uninterrupted by other noises, runs on without ceasing while there is a streak of light in the heavens.

It is almost night now, and a poor pelican of the wilderness, who has been flapping his soiled wings for the amusement of the idle, retires to make room for an illuminated balloon, which at this moment is detached from the ground amidst the shouts and raptures of a crowd, who express their delight with southern enthusiasm, forgetting in the excitement of the moment their habitual tranquillity. It is a

pretty scene: the anxious gazers form a circle of many tier deep; the first row entirely composed of peasant children—chiefly girls—in their small scarlet capulets, like so many red riding-hoods, wondering at something pleasanter than a great wide-mouthed wolf; and the others of rainbow madrasses, subdued by the grave brown of the shepherd's bonnet. Apart from the close press are some ladies mounted on chairs, and here and there a good-humoured papa holding up his bantling at arm's length above the crowd; while all around are female faces full of anxious expectation, not thickset-heads over shoulders, as in a town show, but stretched out at intervals, one from a window, two from a balcony, a fourth tiptoe-ing on a curb-stone; while a group of three travesty the graces on a crockery-ware vendor's cart, whose merchandise still glistens on the pavement "à la triste lueur du suif."

In small places, curiosity seizes with eagerness on every casual recreation which presents itself, sifting the chaff of amusement, and not even disdaining the red-jacketed monkey, or the humours of the illustrious Punch. The balloon is a court-ball, a gala-opera—at least for the capulets, and a

pretty sight for all; it rises steadily and gracefully from the centre of the circle, hung with lights which, as it makes slow progress upwards, illuminate the group below; and full in view of its ascent comes the slower moon, just appearing above the brim of the horizon and casting its poetical gleam over the dark and silent hills, that seem to acquire increase of height and a finer character of loneliness as its sweet and solemn light falls upon them. But who cares about the moon? only myself, perhaps; all are too intent on the balloon to know whether she plays orb or crescent; all watch its upward progress with earnest and simple interest, and frequent and exulting shouts, and loud clapping of hands, and every possible demonstration of joy and wonder.

Perhaps it is their first balloon; at all events, Mongolfier's first ascension, when the spectators embraced each other and wept, and felt as if a path had been opened to the heavens, could hardly have been hailed with more enthusiasm.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONVERSATIONAL POWERS, AND THEIR VALUE — GREAT MEN OFTEN GREAT TALKERS — FINE TALKERS SOMETIMES BAD WRITERS, AND WHY.

How the French can talk—that is, when they are in the mind, (and they are always so, if not displeased with their company): nothing comes amiss to them,—grave, gay, and the intervening placid, are all slipped into, and out of, with the same enviable facility. I once knew a person, a young and pretty girl, who possessed a very remarkable talent: she would open a book, read the table of contents, run over two or three lines in one part, two or three more in another, then throw it by; and the next day, when it happened to be the subject of conversation, discuss its merits and demerits, not only with what seemed an adequate knowledge of each, but almost analytically.

The French appear to possess this singular faculty,—not that I would by any means accuse

them of being particularly superficial talkers, but because they do talk so well and so readily on all subjects, however foreign to their tastes, habits, or occupations, however beyond (I speak now of the humbler classes) their apparent means of instruction, or removed from the ordinary contemplation of their minds, that one almost imagines them gifted with an instinct of speech. A Frenchman seldom makes his head a grave to bury thoughts in,* but a repository from which he sends them out ready winged. A visit which we received this morning, has set their conversational talents—forgotten since we left Paris—suddenly before us; and with it, their exquisite tact in detecting false pretensions in others. If politeness was ever sufficiently influential in France to induce clever people to tolerate prosing ones, it assuredly is not so now; the French are fearful sifters of false claims, and inflict more pain by the fine-pointed weapons of mockery and inattention, than others do by the broad-sword of hostility. Perhaps they may set too much value on colloquial talent, and we too little,—I do not mean as to the enjoyment

* "I make not therefore my head a grave, but a treasure of knowledge."—*Religio Medici.*

we receive from it, or the *accueil* which it procures for its possessor; but as to our general appreciation of the character of mind to which it belongs. With us the idea often prevails, that distinguished talkers are rarely persons of genius, profound thinkers, or eminent writers, but, like some eloquent pulpit orators of whom we have heard, discourse better than they print—a mistake, certainly; witness Burke, Johnson, Voltaire, Sheridan, Madame de Staël, and many others. And then the living examples, bright ones and undeniable, immediately called to mind.*

After all, great conversational powers must proceed from great fulness of mind; one cannot draw constantly or suddenly except from an overflowing source, ready to answer all demands made upon it, or scatter the riches of one's mind to be gathered up, and even appropriated, by all who listen,

* What voices have since gone down into silence! Coleridge and Charles Lamb!—great spirits both, and not the less delightful as talkers for being so. Mackintosh, too, whose rich and varied powers of mind were brought so beautifully into action by the warm glow of social intercourse; and Sharp, whose wisdom, great practical knowledge, unerring judgment, and manly diction, came blended to the ear through the medium of a voice remarkable for its fulness and melody.

unless there be an inexhaustible vein at hand into which the spade may go "deeper and deeper still." A fine talker (I do not mean the daily reporters who fly about from house to house, like penny-postmen, dropping their bulletins) speaks from the exuberance of his ideas, and continually strikes out new ones as he is carried along by their force; and yet to this eminently endowed person we find the higher faculties of the mind often denied by prejudice, and merely (as it would seem) because he can afford to wear fine broad-cloth every day, having enough in his stores to renew the suit as the nap wears off.

It is true that there exist persons who can converse delightfully, and even originally, and yet who cannot put together twenty comprehensible lines; gifted persons, too, in their power of taking the ear and charming it. I once heard a foreign lady surprise, enthral, bewitch, by her rapidity of thought, and beautiful odd way (the way of her own, which so few people have,) of giving it utterance. "Why don't you write?" some one said; "you could make such a book, and that even of your every-day talk."—"I never could do any

thing with my pen," was the answer, and the exact truth. She wrote like a half-mad washerwoman.

In such cases, the want is not of mind, nor even of genius, but of the faculty of concentration, and the habit of arrangement. It is the power of squandering that makes the spendthrift: the same funds under more provident management would yield—not perhaps the rapid and seducing interest of immediate applause, but the constant and augmenting revenue of permanent approval. There are many who can afford to fling their flowers about full handed, not caring on whose heads they fall, and never missing them out of the heaps from which the chymist mind extracts its most precious essence; but who, loving their idle glow and scattered profusion, will not sit down to form them into wreaths, or search for a thread to bind them with.

And so ends digression and simile—and chapter with them.

CHAPTER XXII.

GORGE AND BASIN OF LUZ—LUZ TO BAREGES—BAREGES—ITS POPULATION AND ITS SPRINGS—ST. SAUVEUR—OPENING OF THE VALLEY OF GAVARNIE—THE BRIDGE OF SIA—GEDRO AND ITS GROTTO—BENEFIT OF IGNORANCE—VALLEY OF HEAS, AND ITS SHRINE—PILGRIMS AND PILGRIMAGES—THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS—HOW TO JUDGE OTHERS.

I RECOLLECT the time when I rather thought that Barèges was the whole Pyrenees. I had never heard much of any other place within their range, except perhaps Bagnères, over whose humbler pretensions the European reputation and sovereignty in gun-shot wounds of the former, gave it a most decided superiority. We are just returned from the grey ravine that holds this melancholy spot in its bosom to dine at Luz, which we intend to make our head-quarters for two or three days.

To get from Cauteretz to Barèges, Pierrefitte must of course be passed; it holds the keys of both valleys, which are separated by a lofty moun-

tain, and run in a parallel direction. The close gorge that leads to Luz is eminently picturesque: it opens gracefully, with a soft Italian colouring, and a grey bridge of one arch thrown over its babbling river; but soon narrows into a wooded defile of a wild and romantic character, lonely and deep, with that solemn colouring which belongs to a close rocky gully, a narrow horizon, and a turbulent torrent wrestling with silence, but not conquering its universal influence.

The road through this gorge is considered as an almost marvellous achievement, the difficulties which opposed its progress considered; it is an excellent road, and makes way for itself very ingeniously, sometimes clinging to the rocks at one side, then sliding down from them at another; now carried over the frequent bridge—always of the simple arch of grey stone,—then following the bend of the torrent, and finding just room enough between its bed and the perpendicular heights for an unobstructed passage. There is great tenderness of colouring, notwithstanding its iron-streaked rocks, and a certain poetry of loneliness about this scene that speak a language not unknown to the heart,—a musical language full of sweet notes and

gentle pauses, that talk to it of its old dreams, its gone-by, but ever-dear illusions, as the winter sunbeams do of the light of summer.

But presently the defile opens, widening gradually into a valley, and becomes perhaps more common-place—that is, Pyrenean common-place, which would be the fine-fine of other landscapes, and the basin of Luz offers its soft expanse to charm and surprise (as it never fails to do) by its gracious magic. Scarcely any spot in the whole Pyrenees is so praised, so Eden'd as this is; and for that very reason it was, perhaps, that I felt disappointed. It is a green basin, the surface gently diversified and watered by innumerable rills, pleasantly and beautifully surrounded,—grandly too, by mountains that gather hamlets on their cultivated sides, and overtop them with their boldly indented summits. It is very green, and very lovely,—fertile, fresh, and quiet; but hardly, I think, the downright paradise that it is called,—at least, after my old *Paradise Lost* notions. It has not the exquisite lawny uplands so beautifully frequent in the Pyrenees, nor are the trees so full and branching; but, on the contrary, too often (just now at least) stripped and sticky.

Rested our horses at Luz, the humble *chef lieu* of the valley. A very decent inn, (Cazeau's,) where we secured beds, ordered dinner, and looked out of a dull window. The show things of Luz are a church, old and fortress-like, with the traces of a small door by which alone the proscribed race of *cagots* were permitted to enter, and which is now blocked up; and a ruin, (a beautiful bit of colouring,) as old as the time of the Templars, called Le Château de Sainte Marie, once in possession of the English; and which, though invalided, still seems to guard the entrance of the valley of Bastan—the real valley of Barèges.

The road up this valley from Luz to Barèges is a continued ascent through a gorge of indifferent reputation in point of beauty, but very fresh, and green, and—I thought—sweet, at its opening, and indeed for a considerable way up. Ash, alder, poplar, and other river trees of light and open foliage, are gracefully clumped on the abrupt banks that close in the road to the right, and variegate the more barren sides of the opposite mountains, greatly helping to soften the angry aspect of the Gave. This same Gave is a wicked rover, that hubble-bubbles at a furious rate over

the huge blocks of granite which it has unearthed in its winter vagaries, and dragged along with it by main force. Wonderful gushing of clear water through the fissures in the rocks and the gulleys in the meadows, under the road and over the road; turned here by a slate and there by a stone, every petulant thread whirling its plaything of a mill, and then throwing itself into the Gave as if it were its mother's arms. On an ill-humoured day, all this may be as dreary as report makes it; but with this morning's sky of glory on it, it was charming. Trees scattered about every where,—not perhaps of the best kind, but still trees, and prettily cresting the hills with their light flexible branches, which are neither deficient in shade or freshness.

In short, all the desolation seemed to us to belong to the immediate rent in the rocks in which Barèges itself is placed. Yet even there, the heights to the left throw out from their furrowed flanks a green ledge beautifully undulated, swelling and sinking, and on every swell a cottage in its natural bower, forming a sequency of sweet and graceful miniatures. But the Gave and its connexions make angry winter work here, and their summer traces are no better than devastation. At

every step, as we approach the village of Barèges, the scene grows greyer and more stony, and all the more cheerless for the sort of bleak life which the sullen roar of the waters confers upon it. The place itself is little more than a military hospital in a naked ravine, with an infirmary at one end and a grave-yard at the other; an angry nature, barren and undignified, closes in upon it; but were it a paradise, the sight of so many sick and wounded would overshadow it with gloom; the poor soldiers lying along the benches with death in their wan eyes, trying to warm their languid limbs in perhaps their last sunbeam, form a mournful contrast to any gaiety afforded by the amusements of the *Cercle*. Othello's tender and passionate farewell to the "pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war," may quicken young pulses; but the after day! the sick waggon and the hospital!

Barèges seems not to have made much way since the time when Madame de Maintenon conducted her ailing pupil the Duke de Maine to make trial of its springs, and so brought it into fashion. It had then but one habitation; now it has one street, and that partly of wooden houses, which are staved at the approach of winter, and lotted up for the

next summer's service. It must be good stone work to stand the torrents, and avalanches, and rock-rollings that make the desert echo in the dark months. Two or three pallid-looking officers lounged about, and two or three ringleted heads looked out at the windows,—a small gathering, though they say the place is crowded, and chiefly with English; but the ladies ride out in the morning, and the gentlemen, such at least as are in exercising condition, explore; and have the opportunity of doing so in a country of beauty and romance, which we are told exists within a very short distance of this lifeless region. A trivial circumstance adds a shade to the gloom of Barèges: the dress of the peasant women is oftenest black, and the fashion of binding their slatternly mob-caps round their heads with a broad ribbon of the same funereal hue, gives them a dismal air. The bath chairs, too, look like hospital-sedans for cholera patients,—close box, colour grey, and loop-hole windows.

But if these springs in the desert do really perform the wonders ascribed to them; if they indeed bring healing to those who have been cast out from other sources of health and helps to life, as too

far gone even for hope; then indeed are their waters blessed, and even their barren landscape made beautiful to the feeble who have found strength in its rugged bosom, after having sought for it in vain amidst the glow and perfume of a more inviting nature.

The descent from Barèges to Luz we thought very striking; all mountain descents are so, more or less. The trees which seem to cling to the hills in ascending, are thrown out from them, and the folds of the hills stand apart from each other in different degrees of light. It is true that in going up, the great heights are generally in view, giving shade and grandeur to the distance, and that often in returning we leave the loftiest attributes of majesty behind; but here the descent is against the dark screen that rises out of the plains of Luz. Going up, the meagre, pale perspective is before us; coming down, the grand and dark one,—and so lighted up to-day! such excessive beauty in the heavens, and let down from thence upon the earth, that common things look like effects of magic.

The baths of St. Sauveur (a very short walk from Luz) are much frequented; by some they

are considered as a necessary preparation for the more powerful ones of Barèges, and used by others as a kind of weaning process after them. The village is exquisitely placed just at the opening of the gorge that leads to Gavarnie. It consists of a single street of handsome houses, with as much marble displayed upon their outsides as can be managed in a plain way. These houses are disposed along the ledge of a green mountain, with a wild look down upon the clear and rapid Gave of Gavarnie, as it hurries along through rocky and abrupt banks richly tufted. Soft lawns and branching trees overlook its courses; and baths, with a marble peristyle and an air of oriental luxury, rise above it. More beautiful than Cauteretz, more beautiful indeed than any thing that I know of in its way, but not so cheerful.

Slept at Luz, and were up with the birds: all in movement at five o'clock in spite of a thick fog on the hill tops—a bad omen, our guide thought; but we despised it, and took the road a little after six for the valley of Gavarnie. Some people on hearing any thing indiscreetly praised, feel piqued into opposition; this was certainly not our case, for we set off prepared to think box myrtle, and marsh-

mallows rose-geranium; in short, to believe in the religion of the place without examining its thirty-nine articles.

The opening is rich and romantic. This prepossessing preface is rather a distinctive feature in the Pyrenean valleys; the first leaf leads you graciously into the heart of the volume, and St. Sauveur, which rises up on the bank of the Gave, forms the beautiful decoration of the title-page. My chairmen, whose good nature equalled their agility, would point out every thing that had a name attached to it, and made me remark a spot called Le Pas de l'Echelle, where a band of Miquilites had passed over the hollow of the valley from one mountain to another by the help of a ladder; a mere ladder, they added, and with such an air of straight-forward unimaginative belief, that if the thing had not been impossible, I should have taken it for granted on the testimony of their working-day faces. We asked when this *pas de Zéphyr* had been performed? "Avant la révolution," was the answer. They did not name the revolution of '89, or the revolution of '30; but calling all broils by the same general name, left us the choice of any that had taken place from Pharamond to

Louis Philippe. Not far from the Pas de l'Echelle is the Peyrou Ardoune, or Pierre Ronde, from whose summit the *Brouches*, (the worse than Benshees of the valley) curse and prophesy. Many valleys have their peaks of good or evil reputation: in that of Héas, the Virgin spoke from the top of a rock; her image did the same from the mountain of Bétharam; and the Yona Gorri (flame-coloured spirit) of the valley of Aspe, sends thunder and tempests from the heights of Anïe.

The mist continued to lower as we passed through a hollow gorge, with a naked torrent foaming below; but just as we issued from it, the sun broke through the clouds and lighted up the opening, and at the same moment three figures came round a point of rock into the very spot where its beams fell. They were Spanish peasants, in their summer vests of light blue, crimson sashes, and bright handkerchiefs tied round the heads, cone-form, but flattened a little at the top. Splendid figures all, but one who wore his blanket-cloak upon his shoulders was really magnificent; a robber-chief in look,—not the scowling villain of Itri or Fondi, in whose degraded visage the fierce spirit

of aggression has sunk into the more sordid one of speculating cruelty, but the robber whom young ladies read, perhaps dream, of; who wears a feather in his beaver, and has an eye under in it —such an eye! bold, yet tender; and then the heart, 'more sinned against than sinning,' and the grand mind, mistaken by man and driven by his vulgar inventions to the forest and its lawless, charming, point-of-honour, intelligence-with-heaven etc. etc. life.

This is the young lady's robber, or was so before certain stories of ear-splitting and other *tendresses* were as generally known as recent travellers have made them. Our Spaniard would have played the part grandly, or higher ones; he would have looked Don Gutierre,* or Don Lopez d'Almeyda,† or any other of the terrible heroes of Calderone to the life, no quarter for erring ladies, or suspected ones; yet, though capable of wrath, still the finest specimen that has come in our way of the ultra-magnificents whom one some-

* *El Medico de su Honra,* (the Physician of his own Honour).

† *A secreto Agravio, secreta Venganza,* (To secret Outrage, secret Vengeance.)

times meets with in the mountains, and who contrasted with the grievous-looking faces that hang out at Cauteretz, make one fancy that there can be no medium figures among the Spanish peasants. Those whom we have seen are either conspicuous for personal beauty and elevation of mien, or short, squalid, and ill-featured. I have scarcely remarked what we should call a well-looking man amongst them: all who are not splendid, are hideous, though amazingly picturesque.

The bridge of Sia is (I believe) the first authorized point of admiration in the valley; it is a very sweet pause, and the look from the bridge, and from a point a little above it, is at once soft and spirited. Morning brightening gradually from dirty-water clouds into pinkish streaking; four little mills slide down alongside of the narrow fall there, dividing its stream, tumbles over the rocks in two frothy stripes, looking at a distance like two white ribbons; just sun enough now to make the dew glisten on their brown thatch, and warm up their watery aspects a little. The mills are before Sia; at it, the Gave seems to have taken head, and rushing down through a bold rocky

chasm overhung with wood,* shoots under a double-bridge,—a new arch thrown over an old ivied one, with considerable effect.

After Sia, the gorge becomes again sterile. Passed under the shadow of the Pic de Bergoz, and onwards along the base of schistus mountains, bare, or covered with a thick coating of box, nut, and other brush-wood. Always the sea-green torrent below us, sometimes a wooden bridge (a thing I love, it so becomes goats and goatherds, capulets and capuchons,) crossing it; and at the issue of the defile the pleasant hamlet, meadows, walnut-trees, and lindens of Pragnères. From Pragnères the valley widens, the thatched grange on the glossy lawn becomes more frequent; smooth meadows glisten on the river's brink, or rise up from it gracefully, and the waters, dividing into branches, circle round a wooded islet or a soft savannah. Glaciers sternly shutting in the distance, and the Brêche de Roland capped with snow and glittering in the sunbeams.

Our first halt was at the village of Gedro, (or

* All this beautiful wood has been since cut down,—to show off the water, (*faire valoir l'eau,*) as our guide said: when we last saw it, not a branch left.

Gedres,) pleasantly situated on the soft lap of one of those openings here called basins, where mountains, that in their near community have formed the barriers of the gorge, open their wide screens, and extending them round a broad spread of pasture or of meadow, make room for cottages to group themselves into hamlets on its teeming surface; or, in a more melancholy mood, link their bare arms round some solitary spot, and consign it to abandonment and silence.

From the public-house in the village of Gedro, or rather from its garden, a flight of steps leads down to a grotto (as it is called) of peculiar beauty. A natural cup in a rocky hollow receives a fairy fall,—full, pure, and shaded by the meeting branches which form its infoliated roof. Having filled to overflowing this delicious fountain, the stream gushes by with beautiful impetuousness, and is soon lost sight of between two rocky ledges. It is a bath close and consecrated as Titania's bower, and one looks into it almost expecting to see the white feet of Diana shining through the water. I think she must have bathed here on some sultry day, when the hot chase had sent her panting to its brink with those human feelings of heat and

lassitude to which goddesses, in common with mere mortals, appear to have been liable; while her nymphs, not finding room enough to splash about, talked scandal on the rocks, or played at hide-and-seek among the bushes.

How lucky that Louis Quatorze never chanced to see, or perhaps hear of it! He would have planned its transfer to Versailles, as he did that of the Maison Carrée; or (that not being among the possibilities) have had it travestied at the end of some cropped alley, straight as a bow-string, with his royal self in white marble personifying Phœbus cooling his chariot-wheels in the fountain, while La Montespan and her attendant nymphs scattered rose-leaves on its surface. But kingly caprices apart, what a delicious thing it would be to hang up in the corner of a park, like a picture of Domenichino's, only so much fresher as nature itself is fresher than art. If we had it in one of our show wildernesses, how the annuals would combine to line and lithograph it into celebrity and out of the sweet grace of privacy, and the charm that belongs to a surprise.

I am quite sure that one of the principal reasons why the Pyrenees, when first visited, never fail to

create delight, and to more than justify expectation, is because their beauties are brought for the first time before the eye with the auricula meal still upon their velvet leaves. Passed by, or unthought of, by ambulating artists or sketching amateurs, no gaudy landscape or feeble lithograph has made us just enough acquainted with their forms and their people to deprive them of the gloss and charm of novelty; we seem to have ourselves found out their treasures, and march into the midst of them exultingly, as if we had a right to hoist a flag of discovery on every hill and in every valley. It is all unknown land to the many, and a thousand times the more lovely for being so. No one familiar with Canaletti finds any thing new in the aspect of Venice, and yet nothing else resembles it: and who is there that does not experience, on first entering Switzerland, the drawback made on the full flush of admiration by the Staubachs, and the Giesbachs, and the costumes of Berne, Zurich, or Lucerne, with which they have become intimate in coloured prints?

The valley of Héas opens at Gedro: its chapel and its pilgrimage have given it a Pyrenean celebrity. On the day of the Assumption, the joyous

and the idle, as well as the devout, flock from far and near to the shrine of Our Lady of the Desert, and there, in a stern and rocky solitude, with wild mountains, a dark lake, and the desolation of granite about them, pray in an agony of devotion, embrace the miraculous image of the Virgin,—a peasant virgin (as we are told) in a russet gown and red capulet,—groan out their prayers, chaunt their litanies, grovel, and beat their breasts in intense humiliation; and then, retiring to some convivial corner, feast, romp, quarrel, are jovial, tender, riotous, till another fit of devotion sends them back to the chapel to spread out their contrition at the foot of the altar, and resume the canticle which they had so recently exchanged for songs of love and revelry. The night is an orgie: nothing but the testimony of writers interested by their feelings, and disposed by their justifiable prejudices to give a favourable colouring to every thing that affects national manners, could make such things believed.

But Héas, like Bétharam, may have grown discreet; still I am afraid that pilgrimages—I love the word, it is so full of old, and pious, and beautiful associations—are not so holy in their intents

and purposes as they would seem to be,—indeed that their demoralizing influence cannot be doubted; still there arrive in the holy week at Rome (I have often seen them) pilgrims, whose wayworn countenances testify to the hardships endured in their long and painful journey from the dear land, the far-off home, which they have left behind to go and pray in the sanctuary of the stranger. These poor people feel, I have no doubt, as if led on by an inward spirit of revelation—their star of Bethlehem, which makes their path clear, and stands over the spot where they have come to worship.

I recollect a poor woman, who once sat with me on the grass outside the walls of the monastery of Valambrosa; her husband had gone to pray in the chapel, and mine to visit the monastery whose churlish inmates interdict the approach of every thing that wears the female shape. They were pilgrims, both the man and his wife,—under the vows (as she told me); and were returning from Rome, where they had been to fulfil one made in the hour of sickness, and enjoined by the blessed Virgin herself, who had come three times to the bedside of the man when he was shrived for death,

and promised with her own heavenly voice, the woman said, to restore him again to health, on the condition that he should go on foot to the shrine of St. Peter at Rome, and there perform certain acts of penitence and prayer indicated by the celestial visitor.

The poor man made the vow, got better, and setting out with his wife from their village in Loraine, went his way, as he believed himself bidden to do, without chart or compass to the holy shrine. Strangers to the language, or to the value of a single coin current in the country through which they had to pass, often bewildered amidst cross-roads, sometimes benighted and obliged to retrace their steps in darkness, jeered at by one, relieved by another; walking painfully and with blistered and excoriated feet, they at length arrived, after a bitter pilgrimage of many hundred miles, at the gates of the Holy City, where they at once found friends. The man was taken care of in an asylum where male pilgrims are received, lodged, and, if ill, nursed with tenderness; and the woman found in the convent of the Holy Trinity, all that the charity of the heart beautifully exercised could suggest. Great prin-

cesses and noble ladies (as she told me) knelt upon the ground and washed her feet, all dusty and blistered as they were from the road; served her at supper, made her bed with their own hands, and waited on her for three whole days. At the end of which time, being refreshed and strengthened, the great ladies who (she added) were not nuns, but noble dames in silks and velvets, kissed her as if she had been their own sister, and their dear one; and, giving her money to help her on her homeward journey, sent her to rejoin her husband, who had been treated during his three days of repose with similar kindness

"Better had they both staid at home," says one.

"And minded their household cares, and their children, if they had any," adds another.

Granted. Yet still there is something exceedingly tender and touching in the devotion of these poor people; believing as they did (and in judging we should always place ourselves in the position of those whom we take upon us to judge) this act, which in others might be induced by idle and—as hindering the power of usefulness—culpable superstition, becomes one of humble and sincere thanksgiving. Theirs was the real pilgrim's progress;

not going after idleness or leasing, but fulfilling humbly and by suffering what they believed to be a divine injunction; and having done so, returning homewards full of faith and thankfulness,—not murmuring at what they had endured, not priding themselves on what they had performed, but rejoicing "with exceeding great joy" that they should have been sent (as they devoutly believed) to "burn incense in the temple."

The jolly pilgrim of Héas takes another view of the subject, and instead of keeping off that gamesome mad-cap jubilee with his staff, trots her along under his arm.

CHAPTER XXIII.

APOLOGY FOR MY DONKEY—VALLEY OF GAVARNIE, CONTINUED—THE CHAOS—TOO MUCH LIGHT—AN EAGLE WANTING—CIRCUS OF THE MARBORE, AND THE WONDERS OF ITS AMPHITHEATRE—OUR WORLD AND THE WORLD OF NATURE—MAGIC AND MYSTERY—NO SPAIN—THE CURATE OF GAVARNIE—MORE SPANIARDS—FANCIFUL IMAGININGS—SKULLS OF THE TEMPLARS—THE POOR MAN'S PRAYER—THE HAMLET AT THE CLOSE OF EVENING—THE IDIOT BOY—A MOUNTAIN BALLAD—THE MINSTREL—THE FAIRY AND THE CAGOTS—DARKNESS GATHERING—RETURN AT NIGHTFALL—CHAIRMEN, ACCOMPLISHED AND OTHERWISE.

I BEGIN to fear that my Pegasus is rather a long-eared one, with the bad habit belonging to his fraternity of stopping at every hedge, and browsing on every stray herb, thorn, thistle, downy dandelion, or bitter wormwood,—no matter what, that happens to fall in its way. If I were to die for it I cannot get him straight on through the valley of Gavarnie; so here we are still at Gedro, just come up from the beautiful fountain, and looking in through the kitchen door at a pan-full of trout

frying in a cloud of fragrance, that as we inhale its savoury steam, makes us as hungry as ravens. The mess of millet smokes near it on a dish as large as Herodia's charger, (sign-post dimensions,) and the set-out being particularly neat, makes us rather regret that we have not time to stop and enter into particulars. I always think—a vulgar thought, perhaps, that a cottage *inn*—I was going to say, but I believe it is better not to mince matters, and frankly write *ale-house*, is sometimes a delightful thing; but it must be an English one. "An honest ale-house, (as the kind old man Izaak Walton says,) where you will always find a clean room, lavender in the windows, and twenty ballads stuck about the walls." What a sweet homely English picture! as old as King James, (first of the name,) and as fresh as spring daisies. I, who am certainly no trout-fisher, almost feel myself within sight of it, watching the line playing on the surface of the clear pebbly stream, and the old tree, with its knotty roots in the water, making cool shade and certain shelter for the quiet angler.

My chairmen, evidently lovers of the marvellous, pointed out as we went along La Brêche de Roland, as a gap three hundred feet high in the

mountain curtain of the Marboré is called. It was made (as they assure us) by one blow of the Paladin's sword; who, after this gentle exercise, refreshed himself with a flying leap of a couple of leagues (the guide called it) as the crow flies, landing pleasantly on a rock, which still bears the impression of his horse's hoofs. I asked our guide if he believed the legend; he said that he did and he did not, which I rather take to be the aggregate amount of faith in such matters. Another, seeing that I made a note, said, "This is the mark of Monsieur Roland's horse: my great uncle knew it to be true, and so do many others who are still alive." I smothered my doubts, and spoke of the Preux *à l'Ariosto*, which seemed to please them; but the blow and the leap apart, they had heard nothing of his story. Angelica might have been abbess of Fontevrault, or queen of Cyprus, for any thing they knew about her; but each would probably have been ready to swear, if put to it, that Monsieur Roland was gossip, if not cousin, to his grandfather. The breach being three hundred feet high, honest measure, sounds like something prodigious, but at a distance it is a mere gap: however, it was no bad blow; the blade must

have been true Damascus, to say nothing of the arm:—and then the leap! enough to make Nimrod Osbaldiston die of envy.

After the pleasant pastures and sweet waters of Gedro the gorge blackens, and we move on amidst crumbling rocks, scenting box and noting torrents, till we find ourselves involved in the stony mazes of the Chaos,—the desert where the free bird has entire possession. This Chaos, as it is called, though the country name is Peyrada, is a savage and singular pass, heaped with gigantic fragments of rock, which encumber the earth and block in the eye by their prodigious masses; each recalling what travellers tell us of the rocking-stone of Sinai, but perhaps owing a portion of their fearful gauntness to the verdurous beauty which precedes it. "Grand Dieu!" exclaimed one of my porters, a heavy-looking peasant, as we entered it, "voilà ton monde primitif, avant que tu ne l'aies arrangé à ton gré." He had been a hunter of bears in his youth, but was now content to bring down the eagle, and grow familiar in the solitudes of the desert with those objects to which the untaught mind offers its instinctive worship.

No tradition, I believe, exists of the remote con-

vulsion of nature to which this gorge owes its extraordinary appearance; one might imagine it a battle-field, where the antagonists were giants, and the missiles rocks torn up from their moorings in the earth, and hurled with superhuman force or fury, as the prodigious arm willed it. There is too much sunshine upon it now, more than enough to light it up into a jumble; twilight would throw it into masses, it would be more shadowy, more awfully fantastic; or the breaking morning, with its mysterious and slowly developed light, its wan light that is just not darkness, making phantoms of its forms, would endue them with that vague character, whose unmeasured power rarely endures the test of absolute exposure.

But in or out of sunshine, the effect of this extraordinary pass is most striking, and would be still more so, did it lead at once to the great fall and its sublime amphitheatre. But a gentle vale intervenes,* creating a summer feeling, which

* This is the valley of Gavarnie *proper;* but to avoid confusion, I have given the name generally to the whole vale, from Luz to the Cirque de Marboré. In the map of the country it has many divisions and various names, all of which I have fused into the general name of Gavarnie.

somewhat dilutes the impression left on the mind by its chaotic rocks; an impression that would link itself well with the gloom and mystery of the Marboré. A poor dingy little bird with a feeble whistle was the only sign of life in the Chaos, and that weak evidence hid itself amongst the rents in the rocks, as if it belonged more to the earth than the air. An eagle would have been fine and appropriate; or the stormy petrel, whose name is a picture, with the angry heavens, and the roaring waves, and the desolate rocks that make the mariner's heart quail, in it. But his solitude is on the ocean, and the eagle had deserted his home; so neither came, though invoked.

At length, after a pilgrimage of nearly six hours, and a halt of a few minutes at the little inn of Gavarnie, we approach the arena through an oval basin framed in by grey rocks partially greened, with an underwood of beech and some scattered pines, and divided from the actual hollow of the amphitheatre by the long folds that stretch out from the side mountains, and crossing over each other, conceal the base of the Marboré. As we descend into this first circus, the amphitheatre

presents itself splendidly; the upper towers of the Marboré lighted up with a cold silver light upon the snow that is quite magical, while the lower ramparts repose in deep and stationary shadow. And here the eye brings itself to a central point, from which the arms of the half-circle diverge, taking the form of a blunted crescent, breaking down abruptly at each extremity. This view (advancing towards the circus) is magnificent in form, character, and colouring; within the great hollow is the fall of Gavarnie, the throned idol. I have worshipped nobler ones,—but the shrine! what glory in the wilderness!

The cascade itself recalls the Staubach, another fine fall (in a minor way) that I never could greatly admire, though Lord Byron has associated its image with the sublime one of *Death on the pale horse.* It descends from an elevation of 1250 feet, and is supposed to be the highest in Europe, but of this the eye can form no estimate; it uses the surrounding objects as its standard, and decides by their comparative magnitude. The Staubach, whose tail is only 800 feet long, makes nearly as flourishing a figure as this comet of the desert,

which, though a splendid downward rush of water, broken twice in its fall by the projecting rocks, has no wild ungovernable bursts, no magnificent overbearings; it drops down from the middle of the rocks, instead of coming, like the Handeck, straight from the heavens; the rocks rise up behind and mark its issue, which would be more striking if less obvious.

Besides these defects, it has others; it is visible too long before it is actually reached, and instead of being a front, is a side-scene decoration. If it were in the centre of the solemn and majestic amphitheatre, it would have more breadth and boldness, it would take the lead instead of being an accessory; but placed as it is, I must say that it appears to me not altogether worthy of the amazing magnificence with which nature in her plenitude of means has surrounded it.

The circus of the Marboré within which it hangs—not reigns, is indeed grand; its magnificent arena seems formed to receive the boiling flood of an American cataract. A mighty amphitheatre of giant rocks rises up in graduated ramparts; other rocks spread out from these, stretching their

branching arms round a dark basin, once a lake; but the continued workings of the water having in the course of ages worn itself a passage through these natural barriers, it is now dry. Others again, assuming the forms of architecture, lift up their castellated walls, which from their resemblance to the works of man are called the towers of Marboré, bearing on their mighty shoulders the weight of long-accumulated snows and eternal glaciers. At this moment I can recollect nothing that, as a single image, can be compared with this, nothing that approaches its character of grand and grizzly loneliness: it is a Bible desert, and desolate—but not a desolation; for there are no traces of the overthrow of man's works, no marks of the passage of life and its extinction, no sign that any son of man had passed hereby. The remarkable form of the arena, its depth, and (at this moment) darkness; its loftiness and magnitude depending upon nothing, owing nothing to previous associations, being as it were alone with heaven,—grand, silent, companionless,—presents an image of amazing power to the mind. With a little help of fancy, one might believe it a spot hollowed out of the wilderness for

awful purposes, where rebel angels might hold conclave, or the Phœnician queen of heaven, the horned Astarte, receive the vows of the Sidonian virgins, or hear the songs of Zion on 'th' offensive mountain.' Yet the blue iris and other summer flowers blow within its dreary circuit, as love sometimes buds amidst the ruins of the heart.

*Il fiore del pellegrino**—the beautiful silver thistle of the Lucca hills, is here too, opening its pure star in the desert; nor has the close neighbourhood of the glaciers hindered the green moss and darker pine from mixing with the black and ochrous banding of the detached side-screen, from behind which suddenly, and at this moment, comes the sun, throwing its light on the opposite face of the amphitheatre, whose broad rocks glisten with the moisture of innumerable threads of water that trickle over it, making its smooth front seem like marble, polished almost to glassiness. High rocky points to the left, fine-drawn and glittering, and three parts of the hollow still in deep shadow.

* A large thistle of the sun-flower form, and very beautiful, worn by the pilgrims who visit annually a certain shrine in the Lucca mountains; its blossom resembles mother of pearl, both in hue and lustre.

How the world—I mean the little world of our own contrivance — would seem poor and trivial near to this prodigious world of nature. Fill the deep, and vast, and dark arena with equipages; crowd it with orders of the Garter—or the Bath, the Golden Fleece, or the Golden Eagle; sprinkle it with diamonds; make a way amidst its snows for kings and their regalia; fill the air with courtly music, load it with costly perfume,—how less than littleness it would all seem! Such scenes are worth volumes of instruction; they open to us an upward path, and elevate the faculty of admiration, with which all sentient beings are more or less endued, to the level of legitimate worship.

Blessed and beautiful nature! how fair you are to those who know and honour you, and to whom the fibres of the wild leaf, and the chirping of the little bird, and the gloss of the small berry, seem full of loveliness; but here in this solitude, where the voice of the falling waters utters parables, and the echoes of the desert prophesy,—how holy, how full of mighty images,—images of the early world, when angels were sometimes sent to communicate with man; of the wanderings of the great tribe

who talked with God on the edge of the wilderness, and before whom went the pillar of clouds by day, and the pillar of fire by night, leading them back to the land of their fathers. It is in the solitude of the forest, of the mountain, of the open and silent plain, that the soul feels the influence of natural objects—such as connect themselves with higher ones—in its strength; it is there that the common-place of life loses its hold, and that feeling, sublimed by contemplation, becomes faith.

We did not venture on the Pont de Neige, as the accumulation of snow under which the waters of the cascade pass is called: the increasing coldness of the atmosphere warned us off before we had gone so far, so we took 'base counsel of our fears,' and turned back. And now we are looking down on the hollow circus of the Marboré from the hill that fronts its opening. A shadow passes over the face of the fall, and partially darkens the aëreal ramparts. I cannot describe the effect; there is no breaking up thought to make words of it,—and why should I try it? Has not one with whom Nature has sat down face to face, and while she listened to his love taught him how to paint it?

Has not even he apostrophized as "vain" the

"Aspirations of an earnest will?"

ingratitude, perhaps, in one whose will is power; but a lesson to be taken in wise part by others.

While my chairmen repose, and I still look upon the magic and the mystery before me, the sound of sheep-bells and the call of a shepherd come down from the high mountain pastures of the Malhada de Serades. We are only two hours' walk from Spain, our guide says,—two hours' walk! But alas! two hours is the same thing to me as two hundred; and so, with my head almost through the aperture, I must even draw it in again, and, like the renowned Don Quixote, cheat my fancy with a flock of sheep.

The great road, too, is blocked up: no entering without a quarantine of fifteen days, and in a lazaretto; which might be paying too much for one's whistle, considering the short time we should have to blow through it. Farewell, then, Spain! I shall perhaps never be so near to you again. They tell me you are stern, and bleak, and desolate, with scorched plains and eternal sand-hills; that your briars are without birds, and your fields without

flowers,—but I will not credit them. When I think of you, it will always be with love and with belief: I shall still feel the cool shade of your cork trees, and sit by your fresh tanks, and listen to the tinkling guitar, and the brisk rattle of the castanet, and hear the merry mule-bells jingle as the caravan files down the winding path, and think of jealous Madrid, fair Seville, and stately Cordova, and of all that romance has sung, and history (scarcely less romantic) sworn to, just as I used to do before I came near enough to hear the claims, so long acknowledged by the imagination, coldly disputed.

Returned to the hamlet of Gavarnie with my chair carried backwards, and my face turned towards the Marboré; by which means I enjoyed a view of its glories for nearly an hour longer, taking in the whole of the hollow sweep from one extreme of the crescent to the other, and its sudden break down into softer mountains; which, sinking into green hills, pastured by sheep, or pleasantly wooded, melt gradually into the gentle valley of Gavarnie,—a pleasant valley, where the grass is enamelled with meadow-saffron and moistened by

swift streams, and where the curate sits reading in the shadow of a rock, but with a better breviary open before him than his written one. An angel, the mistress of the inn calls him,—wise, mild, learned, and, she might have added, resigned; for it requires the courage of piety to wear out with cheerfulness a young existence in this lonely hamlet, which, during the seven or eight months of its long winter is almost buried in snow, and not a human being to speak to but the few poor peasants who remain in it; no commerce with the responding mind, no companionship of thought; nature sealed up, and the short hours of daylight bleak and clouded.

Nothing but the consciousness of a great duty, and the power of alleviating by counsel and by comfort,—but above all by the lesson of devout hope, the hardships of the small flock of whom he is in the most beautiful sense of the word the pastor, could make such a situation acceptable to a young and (as he is described) educated man. An intense conviction, the heart-whole earnestness and simplicity of an apostle, and an humble confidence in divine support belong, no doubt, to one who

thus devotes himself to the labours of holiness,—labours too of love, love which finds its requital even here, in the warm affection of the poor dwellers by the winter river and the cold mountains of Gavarnie.

But, after all, it is a beautiful and edifying life; full of usefulness, privileged in good. Who can say, when their wanderings have led them to the remote cabin of the Christian priest, that "there is no longer perfume in the temple, or music in the sanctuary, or emotion in the heart!"

The little inn at Gavarnie afforded us trout and an omelet, to which we added the contents of a wallet presciently stored at Luz. It affords beds, too, but they are not tempting ones. As we arrived at the door, three Spaniards were sitting on a bench before it; they seemed placed there expressly as if to confirm my previous notion of extremes; such prodigies of ugliness! but picturesque in their rags of blue, white, and scarlet, as Octavian in his calculated tatters. I do not know how these people contrive it, but they always seem as if arranged to serve a painter for his models,—ugly, lean, short, dirty, old,—no matter what, the pic-

turesque is always uppermost. There is now an ancient couple to be seen every evening slowly crossing the little place of Cauteretz, two poor persons humbly clad in rusty mourning, low in stature, withered in aspect, and of quiet and unobtrusive mien; yet I defy any one to pass them by without a feeling of curiosity amounting almost to interest. The woman's black veil is not so foreign to the eye,—because it is a common wear in many other countries,—as the capulet, which is peculiar to the Pyrenees; but it produces a totally different effect on the mind, and I cannot, as I see her walk along slowly, help thinking of that Catalina d'Acosta of whom Calderone speaks as of one who had bartered her soul for the possession of certain infernal secrets; or look at the little old man in his worn-out sombrero, without fancying him at least an astrologer, if not a dabbler in other arts and blacker ones. I read (and cannot help it) midnight sins and secrets in their poor old eyes, and think what guilt and mystery a skilful painter would make out of them—good Catholics and harmless creatures, as I have no doubt they are.

Looked into the little church, and at its row of skulls, said to be those of some Templars murdered here on the day—it was the fête of St. Edward the Confessor,—when the once-powerful Order was annihilated by the tyrannous mandate of Philippe le Bel. It is

"A beggarly account of empty boxes,"

which would sorely puzzle a phrenologist: there is no warrant for their authenticity, no voucher but tradition; for ages they have been reduced to the uniformity of the grave, whose sad monotony allows no individual trick of form or feature. When we entered the church, the chairmen knelt down, each uttering a few words and crossing himself devoutly. This act of reverence was pleasing, because it seemed sincere; what is sometimes slurred over as a tax, is by the poor confided in as a help. If "prayer can detain an angel till he leaves a blessing," as a wise and good man* has thought, then what a blessing is prayer. An exquisite evening, with a sweet dimness in it that became the Chaos, darkening its prodigious rocks and bringing out the natural cavern, or the wild

* Jeremy Taylor.

bridge over the torrent, which the morning sun had effaced. A little later, and it would seem like a Memphis in the desert; but now, though the sun speeds westward, and has already dropped behind the side mountains, leaving the valley in deep shadow, yet we know and feel that it is there, and the partial dimness, though favourable to mystery, is still too revealing for illusion.

Another proof of the benefit of shadows: to-day we almost passed by (in ascending from Gedro) the fall of the Pré de Saousa; and now, going back, we are half in love with it as it bounds with a charming, laughing run through declivitous meadows, and, taking a wild leap into the wooded ravine below, rushes on joyfully. Evening descent on Gedro exceedingly sweet: the shadows fall on the hamlet, and on the deep green hills that stretch out their thin detached screen in a fine prolonged line; while behind, a wide interval flooded with light separates them from the higher and still radiant summits of the more distant mountains. A blue smoke curls up from the roof of every cottage: few images of peace equal that which a remote hamlet offers to the mind at close of evening, when the pleasant token of in-door comfort

ascends slowly against the wood, or colours the hill's side with its pale vapour. I never see it without feeling possessed with a happy sentiment of quiet, which the barking of the village cur, or the humming voices of the little children, rather aids than weakens. There are certain indications of life which seem to me to help the sentiment of solitude, even of loneliness; such as the sound of the wood-cutter's axe in the hollow of the forest; the small spot cleared by man's labour in the wilderness; the felled pines and sawing-mill on the brink of the remote torrent; and the solitary family that live, far away from all others, under the rude shelter of the hut that clings to them; all augment or awaken the consciousness of separation from the world; that single point of life shows us by its gleam the vastness of the desert that surrounds it; its utter loneliness had not struck us, but we find man there, and the feeling of solitude sinks into our hearts.

An idiot boy, with a half-starved dog by his side, sat by the bridge of Sia; he was there when we went up, and when we returned he was still sitting on the same stone. He did not look like the *crétins* of Switzerland, broad and bloated; but

had a long, tarnished visage, with a cunning folly in the eye, and a dreary laugh! Tears are gay things compared with the laugh of an idiot,—the loud, confident laugh, that contrasts so mournfully with the utter helplessness of the poor creature who utters it. As we trot along, my porters sing Despourrin's ballads: one has a fine voice, and none are so absolutely tuneless as to harden the patois out of its pleasant sound. I adore the feeling in which Charlemagne, when he saw a new language effacing the one that he loved, ordained that all the ballads in the old tongue, to him the native one—the language of his race,—should be gathered together and preserved. Indeed, so much do I love all that keeps up the love of home, and of the old times and the simple ones, that though I do not understand the patois of these mountains, yet its sound always delights my ear,—morally speaking, as well as musically.

The favourite ballad of Despourrins, is *The Forsaken Shepherd.* Here is the original patois, and the literal—word for word—translation, with which a friend, conversant in the language of the mountains, has kindly favoured me.

LOU PASTOU MALHUROUS.

La haout sus las mountagnes ü pastou malhurous,
Sedut aou pé d'u haou, negat en plous,
Sounyabe aou cambiamen de sas amous.

Cò leouyé, cò boulatye dizé l' infourtunat,
La tendresse et l'amou que you t'èy dat
Soun acco lous rebuts qu'èy meritat?

Despuch t'es accoustade dab y en de coundition,
As prés u ta haout bol, que ma maysou
N'ey prou haoute enta tu d'u cabirou.

Tas oüilles dab las mies nous' dégnen plus mescla,
Touns superbs moutous despuch ença
Nou s'approuchon d'eous miés qu'ent'aous tuma.

Las richesses d'ou mounde nou h'en que da turmen,
E lou plus bet segnou dab soun aryen
Nou baou bas u pastou qui biou counten.

De richesses me passi d'aünous, de qualitat,
You non souy qu' û pastou ma non n'y a nat
Qui n'ous surpassi touts en amistat.

Encouère que you siey praoube dens moun petit estat,
Aymi mey moun berret tout espelat,
Que nou pas lou plus bet chapeou bourdat.

Adiou, cò de tigresse, pastoure chens amou;
Cambià, bé pos cambià de serbidou,
Yamey nou'n troubaras û taou coum you.

LE BERGER MALHEUREUX.

Lá haut sur la montagne un berger malheureux,
Assis au pied d'un hêtre, noyé de pleurs,
Songeait au changement de ses amours.

Cœur leger, cœur volage—disait l'infortuné,
La tendresse et l'amour que t'ai porté
Sont-ce les rebuts que j'ai mérités ?

Depuis que tu fréquentes la gent de condition,
Bien tu as pris un si haut vol, que ma maison
N'est assez haute pour toi d'un chevron.

Tes brébis avec les miennes ne se daignent plus mêler,
Ses superbes béliers depuis cela
Ne s'approchent des miens que pour les frapper du front.

Les richesses du monde ne font que donner tourment,
Et le plus beau seigneur avec son argent
Ne vaut pas un pasteur qui vit content.

De richesses je me passe, d'honneur, de qualité,
Je ne suis qu'un pasteur, mais il n'y a personne
Que je ne les surpasse tous en amitié.

Encore quoique je sois pauvre dans mon petit état,
J'aime mieux mon berret tout pelé
Que non pas le plus beau chapeau bordé.

Adieu, cœur de tigresse ! bergère sans amour
Changez, bien tu peux changer de serviteur,
Jamais n'en trouveras un tel que moi.

When the singing had ceased, came the history of the minstrel. "Lui, Pair de France," as the principal orator exclaimed with fervour, who would not emigrate when other nobles did so; but disguising himself like a shepherd, purchased a flock, and leading it up into the hill-pastures, lived there in solitude, "tout Pair de France qu'il était," composing his romaunts, and hoping for better times. The "Pair de France" seemed to stick in the conscience of the old guide, who evidently had his doubts as to the legitimacy of the title, but the orator beat him down with a look; he then improvisé'd a prose translation of one of the ballads for me in a running way, hallooing cheerily in the midst of it to a fisherman who was just basketing a trout as we passed, and who with the seriousness of his profession turned cautiously round, but made no response. Then my gay chaunter told me the story of the fairy of Bidaloz, *the Lady of the Red Thread*, which his mother believed in, but not he. And we are now among the cagots, who, he assures me, are all born without flaps to their ears;* the cagot girls (he had

* In something the same spirit of bigotted credulity in which some old historians have averred that the Moors,

heard) could never draw water from brook or well without spilling three parts of it, so their houses were unclean, and themselves thirsty. Why the men did not help them, my informer cannot tell, being but little versed in the history of this unfortunate race, who had been altogether forgotten, he says, until the English took to inquiring about them; adding, that they were now extinct, so it was no matter what they had been.

A fine tone of solemnity in the deep valleys half an hour before absolute night, when there are no shadows, but a deep and universal tint spread over the face of nature. Darkness gathering, not from one settled point, but coming as age does on the human face, imperceptibly yet palpably. Trees growing indistinct, and taking fantastic shapes, houses looking like rocks, rocks like castles; but as we come up into the last light of the western sky—the tender gauzy lilac, how beautiful it is! and the stars that tremble through it, coming out one by one until the firmament is studded over, and then the pale, pale lilac, growing paler, and melting into the true star-light blue,—the blue of heaven!

made prisoners at the attack on Narbonne in 1018, not possessing the faculty of speech, barked like dogs.

There was something like a small spire that rose threadily above the dark landscape. I asked my guide what it was, and thought he answered that it *had* been a church: so I said, "And what is it now?" "Why a church, to be sure; what else could be made of it." I once read in some old book, of a bad Count de Mâcon, who had an ugly way of laying his hands on all consecrated property, and to whom, as he sat one night, Don Juan-like, in his castle, carousing with a company of young knights and nobles, there appeared the colossal figure of a man all black, mounted on a steed as black as the rider. The uninvited visitor entered the hall *toujours chevauchant;* and commanding the master of the feast to mount another horse which stood ready at the gate, seized its reins, and galloped *upwards* (odd enough) into the air with his shuddering companion. At present, the goods of the church no longer take shape to avenge themselves when they are appropriated to lay purposes, nor the churches either; many old ones in France are turned into barns, some I believe into barracks; but in the Pyrenees I never recollect to have seen a sacred edifice so converted. There seems great attention paid here to pious observances (outward ones at

least) and a general sentiment of respect towards ancient and holy usages, which if it does not absolutely proceed from conviction, is at least a step towards it.

All but night when we arrived at Luz,—fifteen miles* to the Cirque de Marboré, and of course fifteen back again, at least so they tell us here. I pitied my chairmen, and told them so; but they assured me that my compassion was misplaced. All they wished for was to have the same work every day; it was only when they were idle that their hearts were heavy. I had eight men for my chair, six of whom trotted beside it, ready to relieve those more actively employed. We certainly might have dispensed with two of the number; for I did not observe that they were ever called upon. One was an old man, the other a stripling and his grandson. The first a privileged joker, the last a mild soul who did nothing but gather field-flowers and present them to me, till my lap was so full that I was often obliged to watch my opportunity and slip down a handful through the arm of my chair, when his back was turned. Only one of the eight spoke French, (conversation pitch,)

* Quatre lieues de pays, six ordinary leagues.

the rest had but a few words, and those mixed up with patois. An interpreter has usually an air of full-blown consciousness about him; and well he may, being every moment appealed to. Mine was a proud man, and when the others gabbled, used to give me a Jove's nod, lofty—yet intimating a kind of intelligence between us, which admitted me in some degree to his level.

The authorities of Cauteretz regulate the fares of the chairmen, so that there is no possibility of imposition. Here there is no tariff; the innkeeper generally makes an arrangement for the prices both of chairs and horses, and in most cases satisfactorily. The bridle-path to Gavarnie is good, and might without much difficulty be converted into a regular *char à banc* road; but then the poor chairmen would be set adrift, and a luxurious mode of conveyance, favourable to thought, observation, and one's bones, lost to ricketty travellers like myself for ever.

END OF VOL. I.

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ERRATA.

Page 14,	line 17,	*for*	melancholy	*read* Melancholy.
33,	12,	..	darkens	the clouds darken.
48,	22,	..	Dolly Madge	Dolly or Madge.
55,	10,	..	tempted	tempting.
57,	16,	..	put neither	and neither.
113,	15,	..	Saturnine	Saturnia.
118,	3,	..	Giorgone	Giorgione.
121,	22,	..	trade port	trade river.
142,	11,	..	sky	sun.
166,	12,	..	Tilburino	Tilburina.
368,	23,	..	I do dot	I do not.

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